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CHRISTIANITY AND HINDOOISM

CONTRASTED:

OR,

A Comparative View of the Evidence

BY WHICH

THE RESPECTIVE CLAIMS TO DIVINE AUTHORITY

OF

The Bible and Hindoo Shasters

ARE SUPPORTED.

IN TWO PARTS.

BY

G. MUNDY.

Calcutta:

PRINTED AT THE BAPTIST MISSION PRESS, CIRCULAR ROAD.

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It may be proper to inform the reader, that this little work was composed, without the remotest idea of its being presented to public notice in English. The author's intention was merely to prepare a small tract on the subject to which it relates, in Bengalee. Having, however, with a view of facilitating its progress, first written it in the former language, and also extended it beyond his original design, it was suggested to him by several esteemed friends, that it might be rendered more extensively useful by being first published in its present form. It owes its appearance, therefore, solely to the advice of those friends, for whose judgment he entertains the highest respect, and against which it would be arrogance in him to oppose his humble opinion. He is conscious that a seven years' residence in India, during which he has been in the habit of speaking and studying Bengalee more than English, will have occasioned numerous errors of composition, for which his work will need apology; but if it may prove at all useful in its ephemeral passage to obli-

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vion, his great object will be obtained. With this view, and with the design of deriving from it some pecuniary assistance towards the publication of an edition in Bengalee, he now commends it to the Divine blessing, and to the candour of the Christian public.

ERRATA.

Page 30. l. 3.—*for* " Section 2."—*read* " Section 3."
„ 43. l. 25.—*for* " but is not"—*read* " but *it* is not."
„ 45. l. 27.—*for* " becoming on idolater"—*read* "*and* becoming an idolater."
„ 94. l. 7.—*for* " their being enrolled"—*read* " their *names* being enrolled."
„ 108. l. 33.—*for* " *Jerem.* 53"—*read* " *Isaiah* 53."

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PART I.

OF THE INTERNAL EVIDENCES

OF THE

DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE,

AND

THE DEFICIENCY OF THIS EVIDENCE IN SUPPORT OF THE CLAIMS

OF THE

Hindoo Shasters.

1. LEARNED men of past ages have employed their talents, and greatly benefitted posterity, by writing the history of the times in which they lived. In examining these histories, so far as they respect civilized nations, we cannot find an account of any people that have ever been without a government, and the establishment of a supreme authority for the regular administration of its laws. The wisdom and policy of men convince them of the utility of such an establishment, and the experience of all ages, whether past or present, shews its absolute necessity to the maintenance of social order in a well regulated community.

2. If the wisdom of men convinces them of the benefits of a good government, and its necessity to the maintenance of tranquillity and order, what establishment of this nature may we reasonably suppose, the superior wisdom of God will lead him to adopt for the maintenance of his authority in the world? Certainly, as God is much wiser than man, we must necessarily

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suppose that he also has established that system of moral government which shall most conduce to general good; i. e. that he also has given laws by which men are required to regulate their conduct, and that he will ultimately reward or punish them according to their obedience or disobedience to those laws, so far as they have had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with them.

3. If we cast our eyes around, and survey the present state of the world, we must be convinced, by the ignorance of spiritual things which men universally manifest, and the endless variety of opinions which prevail amongst them as to the character of God, the duties which all men owe to him, and the means of their being accepted by him, that such a revelation is absolutely necessary; i. e. this diversity of opinion evidently proves, that unless God gives a revelation of himself, shewing men what he requires them to do, they can never arrive at any certain and satisfactory conclusion as to what is true, and what is false on this subject.

4. That such a revelation is not only absolutely necessary, but that it has actually been given by God, may be strongly inferred from the variety of opposite claims which the different nations of the earth make to their having received such a communication from him, each asserting that its own sacred books are of divine authority, and contain the revelation required. Hence a difficulty arises. Those professed revelations are almost all of them totally opposed to each other, consequently all of them cannot be true. We never heard of a king who established a separate code of laws, totally opposed to each other, for every province of his dominions; such a system would be productive of endless disorder and confusion. Every monarch establishes one universal law, which is binding upon all his subjects; and for their disobedience to this one law, all will be alike punished. On the ground, therefore, of reason and observation, we may infer, that the majority of the claims which men make to having each received a separate divine revelation must be false. There is a unity in all God's proceedings, and all are cha-

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racterized by truth and goodness: instead, therefore, of a multitude, all opposed to each other, he can, according to this attribute of his nature, have given but one exclusive revelation for the direction and universal government of all his creatures. The fact is, when good money is issued, wicked men immediately imitate it by making and circulating false coin: and so it is here; God has given one true revelation, which is designed for all men, and in consequence of this, wicked men have written and palmed upon the world a variety of books full of error and falsehood, the advocates of each asserting that their books are sanctioned by the authority of the Deity, and contain a revelation of his will for the regulation and government of his creatures' conduct.

5. It is of high and essential importance, that every man should endeavour to distinguish the true from the multitude of false revelations which abound in the world, because the possession or absence of this knowledge is intimately connected with his future happiness or misery. This is a work of great difficulty, and many will be ready to say, By what method are we to proceed in this examination, and what rules must be laid down to enable us to distinguish truth from falsehood? To this enquiry it is replied, that were a written communication to come to us from a person at a distance, there are two ways, by which we may examine it, in order to ascertain the veracity of the claims by which it professes to be supported.

1st. We may examine it as to the subject and nature of the message, and endeavour to judge how far it is genuine by comparing it with the known character of the person, from whom it professes to have come.

2d. We may sit in judgment upon the credibility of the witnesses, and from the apparent marks of fraud or integrity, which are associated with their character and conduct, form our conclusion as to the probable authenticity of the message which they have brought us.

6. In prosecuting our enquiries into the truth of divine revelation, we may, by bringing these two principles to

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bear upon the subject, arrive at a conclusion sufficiently satisfactory to enable us in general to detect falsehood, and also to judge with accuracy as to the probability of what is true. I shall therefore proceed to an examination of the Bible and the Hindoo Shasters, and beginning with the first of these two rules, endeavour by applying it to the subject in question, to ascertain the truth or falsehood of their respective claims.

CHAPTER I.

The Nature or fundamental Principle, by which we may, from the known Character of God, expect the Contents of a true Revelation to be distinguished; and the Examination by this Principle of the Bible and Hindoo Shasters.

The knowledge of the character and attributes of God which is attainable by the light of nature is exceedingly limited; our means are not sufficient to enable us to arrive at any positive conclusions without an immediate revelation from him. It is, however, highly desirable, that what we do or may know of him should be brought to bear upon the subject before us; for although from this nothing in the clear light of demonstration is attainable, yet much in this way may be brought forward to assist us in the prosecution of our enquiries. Every rational man must be ready to acknowledge, "That the invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead," Rom. i. 20. and if we keep close to this as a fundamental principle, we are at once in possession of certain characteristic marks of truth and falsehood, which being brought to bear upon the subject under investigation, will enable us to judge with tolerable accuracy of the authenticity of all books claiming the high authority of being a divine revelation.

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Section 1.

The Extent of this fundamental Principle, and its Application to the Subject under Review.

Considering God as the Creator of all things, which none but Atheists will attempt to deny, it is sufficiently evident, from the works of nature, that he is a great, and wise, and powerful being; and if, in connection with this, we review his providential dispensations in the preservation and government of the world, it is equally evident that he is as merciful and bountiful as he is wise and powerful. But we may go a step further than this. Every man has a something within him, which enables him to judge of what is right and wrong, and which tells him, that if he does that which is right, he will be approved of and rewarded by his Maker; but that if he does wrong, he will be punished. This is what divines call natural conscience. Now this internal feeling is an actual and full recognition of the authority of God—of his hatred of sin—the duty of all men to obey him, and their liability to punishment, if they do not. In short, as it respects the being and attributes of God, men in the general universally agree. Nearly all men acknowledge that there is but one God, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things,—that he is almighty, omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, and unchangeable;—that being himself free from every stain of sin, he will punish all who indulge in it;—that he has created us, supports and preserves us;—and that it is our duty to love, honour, and obey him.

These universally acknowledged truths, therefore, must be the groundwork or basis of our enquiry: we have here something that is tangible, and which it is our duty firmly to keep hold of in prosecuting the examination before us. Now if we bring the first of the principles previously specified to bear upon this investigation, we may, according to it, as the rule of our procedure, reasonably suppose that there will be an analogy between this acknowledged character of God, and the revelation which he has given; and that in this revelation the honour which is due to

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him, on account of the high character which he sustains, and the duties which, in consequence of it, his creatures universally owe him, will be inculcated upon all men. If, therefore, a revelation professing to have come from God, contains, according to this rule, a correct account of him, it is a strong presumptive evidence of its truth: but if the contents of this professed revelation are in opposition to these principles, it is in that case, on the ground of reason and common sense, to be rejected as false, because it is contrary to what God evidently appears to be in the creation and government of the world; and also contradicts the testimony of natural conscience, or the law of nature written on the heart of men, by which their conscience bears witness, and enables them, in the exercise of thought, to accuse or excuse one another. Rom. ii. 15.

Section 2.

The Consistency of the Account which the Bible gives of the Divine Character and Government, and its Harmony with this distinguishing Principle of moral Evidence.

I shall now proceed to show, that the Bible contains a correct and consistent account of God, agreeing with the foregoing statement. The sacred penmen were not self-guided, but, according to their own testimony, wrote under the immediate influence and direction of the Spirit of God. It is therefore reasonable to conclude, that the Bible exclusively is a true revelation from God, in opposition to the claims of those Shasters which dishonor him by a contrary description of his character. The truth of this assertion I shall endeavour to establish, by exhibiting the account of the character and attributes of God, the honour which is due to him, and the worship he requires, which is contained in the Bible; and then shew its superiority to what is contained on the same subject in the Shasters of the Hindoos.

In the Bible, we have a correct and consistent account of the existence and unity of one supreme, glorious, and self-sufficient God. This God is the Creator, Preserver, Governor, and Judge of all men: he therefore asserts his

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own exclusive and supreme authority, and requires all men to worship, honour, and reverence him, according to his high and exalted character.

THE UNITY OF GOD.

Isa. xlv. 21. There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

Mark xii. 32. There is one God; and there is none other but he.

Jer. x. 10. The Lord is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting king.

THE GLORY AND POWER OF GOD.

Isa. xxviii. 29. The Lord of hosts is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working.

Isa. xl. 13. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

GOD IS THE CREATOR OF ALL THINGS.

Gen. i. 1. In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

Isa. xlv. 12. Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their hosts have I commanded.

Jer. x. 12. The Lord hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion.

PRESERVER.

Psalm xxxvi. 6. O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.

Psalm cxlv. 14. The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon him, and he giveth them their meat in due season.

Acts xvii. 24. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is

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worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; for in him we live, and move, and have our being.

GOVERNOR.

Psalm xcv. 3, 4. The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also.

Psalm lix. 13. God ruleth in Jacob unto the ends of the earth.

Dan. iv. 25. The Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

JUDGE.

Eccles. xii. 14. God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil.

Matt. xii. 36. Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.

Acts xvii. 31. He (i. e. God) hath appointeth a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained.

According to this high character which God sustains, he is to be honoured and exclusively worshipped, in opposition to the claims of all false gods, whose worship he has declared is an abomination to him, and has therefore forbidden it.

Deut. vi. 4. Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Exod. xx. 4. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them.

Isa. xlii. 8. I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Matt. iv. 10. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

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Deut. vii. 25. The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God; neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it; but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it, for it is a cursed thing.

The holiness of God, his hatred to sin, and the purity of worship which he requires from all his creatures, is fully stated in the following passages.

HIS HOLINESS.

Psalm cxlv. 17. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

Exod. xv. 11. Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?

HIS HATRED TO SIN.

Jer. xliv. 4. Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.

Hab. i. 12. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment, and O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction. Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF WORSHIP WHICH HE REQUIRES.

Lev. x. 3. I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified.

Psalm lxxxix. 7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.

John iv. 24. God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

By quoting these passages from the Bible, I have made the Bible speak for itself; and the account of the character and attributes of God, and the honour which is here, as well as in various other Scriptures, described as due to him, are, beyond all doubt, strong internal marks of its truth. This account is in short so reasonable, and must commend itself so forcibly to the judgment of every can-

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did man, that he cannot with any degree of propriety dispute the divine authority of the book which contains it. In order, therefore, to shew the strong probable evidence which is derived from it, that the Bible is the exclusive revelation which God has given, I shall proceed to shew in the following section the reasonableness of this account, and its superiority to what is contained on the same subject in the Shasters of the Hindoos.

Section 3.

The contradictory Account of the Divine Character and Government which is contained in the Shasters of the Hindoos, and its Opposition to the afore stated Principles.

In some of the Hindoo Shasters, the existence of one supreme and self-existent God is clearly recognized*, and a departure from his service represented as foolish and vain; yet the duty of exclusively worshipping and honouring him, according to the high and exalted character which he sustains, as Creator, Preserver, and Governor of the universe, is not universally inculcated in any of those Shasters. On the contrary, by a variety of false gods† and dumb idols being set up in opposition to him, he is greatly dishonoured, and generally neglected; and to

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* যোমাং সর্ব্বেষু ভূতেষু সন্তং মাত্মান মীশ্বরং। হিত্বার্চ্চাং ভজতে মৌঢ্যাৎ ভস্মন্যেব জুহোতি সঃ।

কাষ্ঠলোষ্ট্রেষু মূর্খাণাং যুক্তস্যাত্মনি দেবতা।

মৃচ্ছিলা বীতু দার্ব্বাদি মূর্ত্তাবীশ্বর বুদ্ধয়ঃ। ক্লিশ্যন্তি তপসা যুঢ়াঃ পরা শান্তিং ন যান্তি তে।

† ন পূজয়তি যো মোহা দেবীং দুর্গাং মহোৎসবে। দত্ত্বাহা প্যথবা নন্যাৎ কামানি-ষ্ঠান্নিহন্তি বৈ। মৃত্তন্ম গোশকৃৎপিত্তৈস্তথা বালুকয়া পিবা। কৃত্বা লিঙ্গন্তু সংপূজ্য বসেৎ কল্পাযুতং দিবি। বরং প্রাণপরিত্যাগঃ শিরসোবাপি কর্ত্তনং। নত্বনভ্যর্চ্চ্য ভুঙ্ক্তীত ভাগবতমবৌক্ষত। শিবলিঙ্গপ্রতিষ্ঠাতা বসেৎ কল্পাযুতং দিবি। বিষ্ণুপূজাং বিনা যোহি ভুঙ্ক্তে বিপ্রো দিনে২। অভক্ষ্যং ভক্ষয়েন্নিত্য যতো চণ্ডালতাং ব্রজেৎ।

কাঞ্চনীং পুত্তিকাং কৃত্বা নানা রত্নময়ীং শুভাং। পূজয়েদ্যস্তু বিধিনা সযাতি পরমং পদং। রাজতীং তাম্রময়ীং বাপি মাহেয়ীং বাপি ভাবিনীং কৃত্বা মূর্ত্তিময়ীং দেবীং পূজয়িত্বা বিধানত ইহলোকে সুখেস্থিত্বা পরে মোক্ষ মবাপ্নুয়াৎ ন তত্র গ্রামে দুর্ভিক্ষং নচ মারী প্রবর্ত্ততে। শুদ্ধয়ারাধিতা যত্র পত্তিতা চ গৃহে সদা।

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these dumb idols and fictitious deities men are commanded to pay their adorations, to the total disregard of Him from whom they have received life, and breath, and all things.

The Shasters of the Hindoos, as evidently appears from the passages quoted, contain the most glaring contradictions. In one part, departure from the worship of God is censured as the fruit of ignorance and folly: in another, departure from Him to the worship of fictitious deities is inculcated, and the punishment of hell threatened to them who despise the idols*. These contradictions, therefore, evidently prove that the authors of these Shasters, instead of being guided by the unerring Spirit of God, wrote merely according to their own blinded judgment and conception, and are a standing proof that the claims of these Shasters to divine authority are false, and without foundation.

I know the Hindoos will say, in reply to this observation, that the worship of the debtas and idols, and the worship of the supreme God, are substantially the same, because he receives through them the worship of his creatures. This explanation, however, is by no means satisfactory. Allow me to ask the advocates of this heterogeneous system the following question:—Suppose your servant, instead of attending at your house to do the work proper to his situation, goes to the river side, makes an image of clay, calls the image he has thus made his master, and waits diligently upon it, by placing rice before it, screening it from the sun, pouring water upon it, &c. Suppose he comes to you in the evening, and when you charge him with having neglected your service, he denies it, and explains himself by telling you what he has been doing:—will you, I ask, admit of this explanation, and allow the reality of his professed service? And suppose he continues this practice during the whole month, will you at the month's end pay him his wages? No; instead of doing this, you will look upon him as disordered in his intellect, and send him about his business. Applying, therefore, this illustration to the advocates of idolatry, allow me

* পুত্তিয়াম্ শিলাবুদ্ধিং কুর্য্যাৎ নরকং ব্রজেৎ।

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to tell them, that however they may think to get to heaven by it, they will find themselves at last, like the servant who came for his wages, wofully disappointed; for instead of heaven, hell will undoubtedly be their portion.

Again: the Hindoos themselves allow these debtas, whom they call the representatives of the Deity, to have been exceedingly wicked; and the Shasters, which record their histories, state them to have been addicted to every vice which can disgrace human nature*. Can we then suppose that the Shasters, which state such polluted beings to be the representatives and vicegerents of the Deity, to be true? Can we suppose that the infinitely pure and ever blessed God, who hates all sin, will hold intercourse with, or condescend to be worshipped through the medium of those who on all hands are allowed to have been so notoriously wicked? Impossible: it is the highest dishonour that can be offered to God, to associate him in any way with so much impurity: it is opposed to reason; it contradicts the universally prevailing laws and customs of mankind in civil affairs, and is a strong mark of the falsehood of those Shasters which contain such inconsistent and contradictory statements. How different is this from the account of the divine Being, which is contained in the Bible! There he is represented as saying: "My glory will I not give to another, nor my praise to graven images."

In order, therefore, to enable the reader to judge whether the account of God which is contained in the Bible, or whether that of the Hindoo Shasters is most likely to be true, I shall here introduce two easy and familiar illustrations, the first applying to the worship of the debtas, and the second to the worship of idols.

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* In the history of these gods, we are informed, that Brahma was inflamed by lust towards his own daughter; and it was only through the intervention of Shonok and other Rishees, that he was prevented from committing the most unnatural crime. Indro and Chondro eloped, and lived in adultery with their Gooroos' wives. Christno carried on an illicit intercourse with an endless number of milk-maids, stole their clothes whilst bathing, and wantonly amused himself by jesting with their nakedness. And the story of Sheeb, from which the worship of the Linga originates, is of so horrid and monstrous a nature, that it is an insult to common decency to repeat it.

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First, I ask, then, in reference to the worship of wicked debtas, such as those whose histories are contained in the Hindoo Shasters are said to have been, Has any person ever heard of a king issuing a circular through his dominions, which absolved his subjects from their allegiance to him; which said that the king no longer required them to honour, reverence, and obey him as their sovereign, unless perfectly convenient to them; but that they might, if they preferred it, respect, reverence, and serve the captains of gangs of thieves, the most notorious adulterers, and other debauched characters, who had made themselves infamous by depredation and every kind of wickedness in his kingdom: and that, if they thus acted, their sovereign would require no more from them; but accept this, though they treated him personally with the utmost contempt and indifference, as a full and satisfactory proof of their loyalty and affection? Were a circular of this nature, professing to have come from the king, to be issued in any country, we may reasonably suppose that the inhabitants would, on account of its absurdity, suppose it to be a fiction, and universally disregard it. In fact, reason and common sense would convince them that it was a forgery; because in every country, the king, his counsellors, and all other persons filling situations of eminence, demand, according to their dignity, respect and honour from their inferiors.

I pass on from this illustration, and with reference to the worship of idols, ask, in the second place, the advocates of this worship, if they think a king would be pleased with his subjects, were they to make a variety of monstrous ugly shapes,—call these their king,—say he resided in them, &c. &c. and instead of honouring and reverencing him only, pay respect to these hideous and fictitious objects which they themselves had made: and if they think the king would not be pleased with his subjects for such conduct as this, how, then, can they suppose that the great King of heaven and earth, the living and the true God, will be pleased with them, when they make a variety of hideous images,—call these God,—say he is in them,

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and substitute the worship of these fictitious objects for the worship of him who is a Spirit, and who requires to be worshipped in spirit and in truth?

Now let the reader, who is desirous of distinguishing truth from falsehood, bring these two illustrations to bear upon the subject under investigation; let him apply them to the contents of the Hindoo Shasters, and compare the accounts of the character and worship of God which is contained in these Shasters, with the more reasonable and just account which is contained on the same subject in the Bible: and if his mind be free from prejudice and misapprehension, he will be surely ready to acknowledge, that the Shaster which commands universal and exclusive honour to be given to God, as Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all men, is true; whilst those which deprive him of this honour, and give it to a variety of fictitious polluted deities and dumb idols, are beyond doubt false, and the productions of men of corrupt and reprobate minds.

The purity and spirituality of worship which the Divine Being requires, is also fully inculcated in the Bible; but it is nowhere to be found in the Shasters of the Hindoos: instead of this, their religious worship is connected with profane songs, obscene ceremonies, indecent dancing, and various other immoral and unnatural practices, which tend to pollute the mind, elicit impure desire, and open the door to every kind of licentiousness*. The Hindoo Shasters, instead of inculcating, like the Bible, universal integrity and benevolence, permit, in certain cases,

* I only need, for the confirmation of this assertion, to refer the reader to the midnight dance and song before the idol, on the last night of the Doorga Poojah, and to the obscene practices on the boats, when the idol is on the succeeding evening thrown into the river. We may also infer, from the images on the great temple, and several of the inferior cars of Juggernaut, what takes place at the Rhut Jattra. Whilst the story of Sheeb, when Narayon assumed in his presence the form of a beautiful woman, (from which the worship of the Linga originates,) with that of Christno and the milk-maids, and various others of a similar nature which are recorded in the Shasters, have all the same unhallowed tendency of inflaming the passions, and engendering crime.

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of prevarication and lies*; and the effect of this permission must be evident to every observer of their moral character. The Shasters may confine this permission to certain cases; but the Hindoos, in their conduct, have extended it alike to all: for it is an evident and painful fact, that they are perhaps the most addicted to falsehood of any people upon the face of the earth; and a man must be an eye witness, before he can believe the audacious and composed manner in which they can lie on the most trifling and ordinary occasions†.

Examining, therefore, the contents of the Hindoo Shasters according to the principle before laid down, it is evident that they cannot possibly be true. The application of this principle will perhaps be best understood by the following illustration. Suppose a native of Benares is living at Calcutta, and a person brings him a letter, and says it is from the king of Benares. Suppose he has no personal acquaintance with the king, yet knows him to be a very wise, learned, benevolent, and holy man; and that, in consequence of his goodness, united to the high authority which as a king he sustains, he is worthy to be universally loved and obeyed by all his subjects. In this case he will of course, before he opens the letter, expect to find its contents harmonize with the wisdom, goodness, and authority of its professed author: but if, on examination, he finds it quite the reverse, he will no doubt immediately reject it as an imposition. The king, he knows, is a wise man; but this letter contains the most

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* স্ত্রীষু নর্ম্ম বিবাহেষু বৃত্ত্যর্থে প্রাণ সঙ্কটে। গবার্থে ব্রাহ্মণার্থে চ নানৃতং স্যাৎ জুগুপ্সিতং॥

† The author lately detected some Hindoos in his employ, of attempting to deceive him. On discovering their fault, he endeavoured to extort confession from them; but this was utterly vain: they unitedly persevered in asserting their innocence, and denying the crime laid to their charge. Being, however, ultimately convicted by facts which were too plain to be withstood, they attempted to apologize for their infamous conduct by saying, that the principal person concerned was a Brahmin, and that they were required by the command of the Shaster to lie, in order to save him from the difficulties into which he might be brought, if his crime was discovered.

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childish trifles. The king is a learned man, but this letter manifests the most consummate ignorance, and is full of contradictory statements. The king is a good, and a holy man; but it contains many impure sentiments, and is filled with a variety of statements, which in their practical tendency lead to every kind of wickedness. Suppose this, I say, to be the character of the letter; and suppose at the same time, that it requires the subject to whom it is addressed no longer to reverence and obey his sovereign, from whom it professes to have come, but absolves him from all further allegiance; he will of course, in that case, reject it as the attempt of some wicked person to impose upon him: it contradicts both his reason and his antecedent experience of the character of its professed author, and therefore further investigation is unnecessary, to convince him that it is the offspring of fraud and falsehood. But if, on the contrary, this letter harmonize in every part with the wisdom, goodness, purity, greatness, and authority of its professed author, he can in that case have no reasonable ground for rejecting it. And so, according to this rule, whilst the Bible is worthy of all acceptation, the Hindoo Shasters, on account of their being full of inconsistencies similar to what, by way of illustration, I have described in the letter alluded to, must, on the ground of reason and common sense, be rejected as the fruit of imposition and falsehood. Their nature and contents evidently prove them to have originated in the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. Eph. iv. 14.

CHAPTER II.

The Moral Precepts of the Bible, with the Characters which it is designed to form; and its Superiority in these and various other Respects, to the Hindoo Shasters.

The Bible contains a perfect system of moral precepts. The duty which men owe to God and to their fellow creatures, in all the different relations of life, it clearly defines, and authoritatively enjoins: it countenances no sin—ad-

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mits of no licentiousness—it sanctions no austerity—it contains no superstition—it will be satisfied with no partial regards, but requires universal obedience; and plainly declares, that he who offends in one point is guilty of all. For the confirmation of the truth of this statement, I request the candid reader to peruse the list of passages contained in the following section, which I have selected from it, and which are in entire accordance with the whole of its contents on the subject of personal and practical religion.

Section I.

Of the Moral Precepts of the Bible.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love: in honour preferring one another; not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord: rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer: distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not: rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good. Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom

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honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. Be sober, and watch unto prayer. Have fervent charity among yourselves. Use hospitality one to another. Honour all men: love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

Were it necessary, I might multiply quotations of this nature to a much greater extent; but these are abundantly sufficient to give the reader a general idea of the nature, variety, and excellency of the moral precepts which the Bible contains, and the universal holiness which it inculcates.

I observe further, that the Scriptures are not satisfied with the mere act of external obedience to the duties here enumerated: love to God is denominated the first and great commandment; and from this, as the internal principle and spring of action, all these duties are required to be performed. The Bible requires internal purity of heart; and although men may be exceedingly strict in their attention to morals, and correct in all their external deportment, yet if unholy and improper dispositions are allowed to reign within, they will be rejected by Him who searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins of the children of men, and who requireth truth in the inward parts. The following passages point out the attention to this important part of vital religion, which the Bible universally enjoins.

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Exod. xx. 17. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Prov. iv. 23. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Eph. iv. 31. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another.

Psalm li. 6. Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts: and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom.

Matt. v. 21. It was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

1 John iii. 15. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Matt. v. 27. It was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

The passages here quoted principally, as may easily be seen, (if they are duly attended to,) refer to that internal purity of heart which the Bible requires of all men to cultivate. Such indeed is the high standard of purity it erects, that it will not allow of a vain worldly licentious thought or impure desire of any kind. A strict and uniform attention to all the moral duties before enumerated is required, but they must all be accompanied by this inward principle of holiness—must all spring from the most exalted purity of motive—otherwise they are of no estimation, and will not be accepted in the sight of God.

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But I proceed to observe, that in addition to the constant attention to these duties which is required, and the performance of them from pure motives, accompanied by inward sanctification of heart, it is also required that they be performed without any reference to personal fame or human applause. A vain-glorious desire of that honour which cometh from men, must never enter into the thoughts, or influence the actions of him, who in the performance of these relative and social duties desires to please God: this is sufficiently evident from the following passages.

Matt. vi. 1. Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.

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The desire of human applause, which is the disposition of heart forbidden in these passages, is exceedingly prevalent amongst the Hindoos. Their religious devotees submit, it is true, to a variety of austerities; but is it, I ask, with a sincere desire to please God, that they thus put their bodies to pain? It may be so in a few solitary instances; but they who are acquainted with their character must know, that the majority of them are influenced only by pride, and the desire of being reputed for their sanctity amongst men. This was one of the prevailing sins of the scribes and Pharisees in the days of Christ: all their works, he declared, they did for to be seen of men; and on this account he pronounced them a set of worthless hypocrites, who could not possibly escape the damnation of hell. The uniform obedience, therefore, which the Bible requires to the various important duties previously enumerated, the positive manner in which it condemns every desire of human applause, and the decision with which it inculcates, in the due discharge of these duties, a disposition so contrary to the depraved feelings of the human heart, may well be enumerated amongst the many other strong presumptive evidences of its divine authority.

But in addition to what has already been brought forward on this subject, the Bible, I proceed to observe, is distinguished by two peculiar principles, i. e. by two principles peculiar to itself, which are not to be found in any book whatsoever of mere human authority; and these two principles, being opposed as they are to all the commonly received and prevailing opinions of men, will, if duly considered, be looked upon by every candid enquirer as a still stronger proof of its having God for its author.

1. Scarcely a book (which is not drawn from the Bible) will be found in the world, in which false honour*, valour,

* I allude to that mistaken idea which leads men, in defence of their supposed honour, to resent every imaginary affront; and which attaches more honour to the wicked act of taking away a neighbour's life by duelling, than to patiently bearing an injury, in the spirit of Christian forbearance.

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heroism, &c. &c. are not applauded in the highest terms, and the possession of these considered as a virtue to be praised and universally aspired after: but not a word in commendation of these imaginary virtues is to be found in the Bible. Since, therefore, it entirely withholds its applause from these commonly commended characters, it is in this respect peculiarly distinguished from all the writings of men.

The second peculiar distinguishing principle of the Bible, is its commanding men to love and pray for the welfare of their enemies—not to resist or revenge injurious treatment—to love their neighbours, and seek their happiness and welfare equally with their own.

Matt. xxii. 39. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matt. v. 38. Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.

Rom. xii. 17. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

1 Peter ii. 19. This is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffetted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

Now let us for a moment imagine the effects which, as far as we can judge, would result from the universal prevalence of either of these two opposite principles of

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resenting injuries, and forgiving them; i. e. suppose the first universally to prevail, to the total exclusion of the second, and the world would in consequence of it be filled with strife, oppression, and bloodshed: but let the second universally prevail, to the total exclusion of the first, and there will at once be an end to every hostile passion; every man will look upon his fellow man as his brother, and peace, and harmony, and love, as the natural effect, will soon extend their happy reign to every corner of the habitable globe.

Let the whole, therefore, of what has been advanced on this subject, now be put together; i. e. consider the Bible as distinguished by the two principles before stated —recollect also this is a peculiarity which the Bible alone can claim—and that in this respect it is totally opposed to all the writings and commonly received opinions of men. View, in connection with this, the holy and peaceful effects which would result from the prevalence of the last, in opposition to the first of these two principles—compare these effects, and see how exactly they harmonize with the spirit and nature of that long list of moral precepts previously quoted:—and may I not reasonably suppose, that, on this view of the subject, every candid enquirer will be ready to acknowledge, that this distinguishing feature of the Bible is a weighty consideration, and demands a prominent place in the long list of evidences by which its high authority is supported?

Section 2.

The Characters which the Bible is designed to form.

It is one of the highest compliments that a Hindoo can pay to a man, to say that he is well acquainted with the Shasters; but according to the rules laid down in the Bible, acquaintance with its contents will avail men nothing, unless they apply that knowledge to practical purposes. In the practical use of these precepts, the Bible is not only designed, but also calculated to form a perfect

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character. It furnishes a perfect rule—presents a perfect example: and so far as men live under the genuine influence of its important truths, so far will they habitually approximate towards that perfection which it is designed to produce.

That the Bible presents a perfect rule, is sufficiently evident from the variety of its precepts which have already been quoted. I shall therefore now proceed to notice that perfect example which it presents, and afterwards endeavour to shew the holy influence of its truths upon those who have received and obeyed it, by exhibiting two or three characters formed upon the model of that perfect example which it presents, and commands men universally to imitate.

In the conduct of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose history is recorded in the Scriptures of the New Testament, we have a *spotless* character, and a *perfect* example presented to our view. It is testified of him, (1 Peter ii. 22.) that he did no sin, neither was any guile found in his mouth: when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. And again it is stated, (Heb. vii. 26.) that he was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. The statement which is given in these passages of his perfect holiness, and freedom from every sin, is corroborated by the testimony of Judas and Pilate. Judas, his betrayer, after hearing that he was condemned, unable to sustain the conscious weight of his guilt, went out and hanged himself, saying, (Matt. xxvii. 4.) "I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood:" and Pilate, the Roman judge, after he had examined him on the ground of the accusation which the Jews brought against him, said, (Luke xxiii. 4.) "I find no fault in this man." We have also, in John viii. 46, an account of an appeal which Christ himself made to his enemies on this subject: "Which of you," said he, addressing himself to them, "convinceth me of sin?" To this appeal, however, they made no reply, which is an incontestible proof of his inno-

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cence; as their malice, jealousy, and opposition to the doctrines he taught, would naturally lead them in reply to accuse him, had there in any part of his conduct been the least shadow of a fault with which they could have charged him.

In addition to these attestations of his holiness and innocence, we have also, in the same inspired records, a further account of the activity and benevolence by which his life was characterized. It is said, in reference to his labours, "that he went about doing good;" in reference to his teaching, "that he spake as never man spake;" and in reference to the perfect obedience which, as our representative, he rendered to the law of God, "that he magnified it, and made it honourable."

I shall now present to the view of my readers, an account of a few characters formed on the model of this perfect example, which the Christian Scriptures exhibit: and the humble, holy, and peaceful deportment, by which these characters have been distinguished in the midst of unparalleled labours and sufferings, may be considered as an exhibition of the uniform practical effects of the truths of Christianity upon all who live under their genuine influence.

The inhabitants of several cities of Greece, before they became Christians, were fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, covetous, drunkards, revellers, extortioners, &c. &c. but after they embraced the gospel, they entirely renounced every vile practice to which they were previously addicted: they put off all these, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy communication out of their mouth. He that had been accustomed to steal, stole no more, but laboured, working with his own hands the thing that was good, that he might have to give to him that needed. There was, on their becoming Christians, an end to bitterness and strife: they mortified their members upon earth, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, covetousness, &c.; they put away all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, with all malice,

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and became kind, tender hearted, forgiving one another, knowing that God for Christ's sake had forgiven them. They brought forth the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. They abounded in every good word and work, and were, for the purity of their lives and the peacefulness of their tempers, "living epistles, read and known of all men." In short, so entire and complete was the moral change which the gospel produced upon them, that the apostle could address them in reference to it, saying, "Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

I shall now pass on from this cloud of witnesses to notice two individual characters, viz. Stephen and Paul, in whom the admirable influence of gospel principles was remarkably exemplified. Christ has commanded his people to pray for the welfare of their enemies—and this he did himself; for when dying by the hands of wicked men, he prayed that divine mercy might be extended to them. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke xxiii. 34.) Now to approve of the precept which Christ has given in this respect is easy, but to imitate his example is difficult, because such a line of conduct is contrary to the depraved feelings of the human heart, which naturally incline men to anger, resentment, and revenge. We have, however, in the account of Stephen, which is recorded in the Acts, (chap. vi. vii.) an instance of divine grace triumphing over these depraved dispositions. The enemies of Stephen, because he endeavoured to convince them of their errors, and to instruct them in the principles of Christianity, were so enraged, that they stoned him to death; and the last words which he uttered, before he expired, were a prayer for their forgiveness. (Acts vii. 69.) "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge; and when he had said this, he fell asleep."

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The apostle Paul, before his conversion to Christianity, was, according to his own confession, (1 Tim. i. 13.) a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious: but afterwards he spent a life of unwearied exertions, which was also attended with unparalleled privations and sufferings, in his endeavours to do good, and to benefit the condition of his fellow creatures. The account of the labours and sufferings which he underwent in this career of philanthropy are fully stated in the following passages.

1 Cor. iv. 9. I think that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death: for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; and labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the earth, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day.

2 Cor. xi. 24. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils amongst false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

2 Cor. vi. 4. In all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings.

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It is scarcely possible for any man to read this long list of afflictions which the apostle underwent, without feeling his heart melted into the tenderest sympathy; and yet numerous and great as the trials which he has here recorded appear, it is more than probable, that they are by no means the whole of what he underwent in this sacred cause of truth and benevolence. And whilst we survey these afflictions, the spirit in which he sustained them also demands our attention. A person unacquainted with his character, may be ready to suppose that he was influenced by a spirit of self-righteousness—seeking after imaginary merit, or desirous of obtaining human applause. On acquaintance, however, with his history, we find that it was quite the reverse. Instead of being influenced by any inferior motives of this kind, we find him, in the midst of all his accumulated labours, characterized by a spirit of genuine humility, and renouncing every pretension to personal merit. Speaking in reference to his former conduct, he acknowledges himself to be "the chief of sinners;" and in reference to his Christian attainments, to be "less than the least of all saints:" and though he was in reality the greatest, most useful, and most laborious of all the apostles, yet so deep was his humility, and the sense which he had of his unworthiness, that he professes himself unfit to be numbered amongst such exalted characters. "I am," he writes, 1 Cor. xv. 9. "the least of all the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." In short, his humility consisted not in a mere empty expression, but amounted to a total renunciation of personal claim; that is, he placed no dependance upon his labours or sufferings as the ground of his acceptance in the sight of God. Instead of looking upon himself as possessed of any merit, which he might plead before God on account of them, as a guilty sinner he cast himself entirely at the feet of Christ, for pardon and salvation.

The following passages, selected from his epistles, contain a statement of his views and feelings on this subject.

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Gal. vi. 14. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Phil. iii. 7. What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death.

There is also, in addition to what I have already brought forward, another trait peculiar to the character of this zealous apostle, which is, that whilst he placed no dependance upon the multitude and utility of his labours, he at the same time, although his attainments were of the highest order, was never satisfied with them—he was perpetually aiming after increasing holiness, and increasing devotedness to the service of God—constantly erecting a higher and a higher standard, and exhorting those to whom he wrote, to be perfect, to press on, to grow up in him (i. e. Christ) in all things: and these exhortations were enforced by his own example, of which, with the views and feelings which he had on this subject, we have a full account in the following verses.

Phil. iii. 12. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded:

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and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

Section 2.

The Hindoo Religion produces no beneficial Effect on the moral Character.

In the foregoing section, I have endeavoured to shew, that the Bible is designed to form a perfect character—that it contains a perfect code of moral precepts—that it presents to view a perfect example—and that, as far as men live under the genuine influence of its important truths, so far will they approximate towards that perfection which it requires. Having, therefore, stated and illustrated the various points here specified, I shall now, by contrasting it with the Shasters of the Hindoos, endeavour to shew its superiority to these Shasters in the several particulars here specified. I have given the reader an account of the wonderful change effected upon the moral character of the inhabitants of several cities in Greece by their reception of the gospel: and were it requisite to add weight to my argument, I might greatly enlarge this account by shewing, that this was not a singular, a solitary instance of the moral change which the gospel can produce, but that such are its uniform effects, and the legitimate consequence which arises from its reception in sincerity and truth; and that this effect of its reception has been exemplified in thousands of instances, from the period of its first establishment in the world unto the present day. Men who have been cruel, covetous, worldly minded, drunkards, thieves, liars, adulterers, and addicted to every vice which can disgrace human nature, have, immediately on their being brought under its influence, renounced their beloved sin—been distinguished in their future life by the spirit of meekness, benevolence, and piety—have exchanged their vices for every virtue which can adorn the character—and, influenced by love to God and compassion to man, have spent the resi-

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due of their lives in labours and sufferings, to promote the glory of the one, and the happiness of the other in the world.

In order, therefore, to aid our enquiries into the truth or falsehood of the respective claims of the Bible and Hindoo Shasters, I shall now proceed, (as the tree is known by its fruits,) to bring them in this respect into comparison with each other. Sufficient on this head has already been said, in reference to the former: confining my attention, therefore, in conclusion, to the latter, allow me to ask the advocates of the Hindoo Shasters, if any effects similar to what have been described, have ever been produced by the religion which their Shasters inculcate; and if they cannot produce a multitude of cases in which such effects have attended its reception, if they can at least produce one solitary instance of its having ever reclaimed one man from vice, and effected a total change in his moral character. The answer to this question must, if dictated by truth, I apprehend, be in the negative. The Hindoos, in support of the divine authority of their religion, can produce no testimony of its having turned a sinner from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. The truth of the case, to every observer of the nature and genius of their religion, is too plain to be denied. Hindooism contains no principles calculated to produce effects equal to those which I have exhibited as resulting from the reception of the gospel, neither does it propose any similar perfection of character. The moral character of its adherents is in fact a thing of little importance, and on which it lays little stress: provided they attend to its prescribed ceremonies, it takes little notice of the vices in which they indulge. In short, to speak the plain truth, the moral character of its followers, instead of being elevated, is debased by it. It hardens the heart, destroys natural affection, by encouraging children to burn their parents; and by the indecent dances, profane songs, and other obscenities connected with its festivals*, it in-

* See a reference to these obscenities in the note at the foot of page 14. In addition to which, I may also refer the reader to the worship of Christno un-

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flames every depraved passion of the heart, and leads to the commission of a thousand crimes, which would not prevail in the manner they do, were it not for its influence upon the people, and their superstitious attention to the ceremonies and poojahs which it enjoins. Reason and common sense assure us, that there must ever be a connection between cause and effect. No effect of any kind can possibly be produced without a sufficient corresponding cause: consequently, as no good moral effect attends the reception of the Hindoo religion, it must be evident, that there is a want of corresponding principles in the nature and genius of that religion. For the confirmation of the truth of this assertion, allow me, by way of illustration, to request the reader's attention to the following question.

Suppose a man who is an atheist, and denies the existence of God, embraces the Hindoo religion. Suppose that whilst he was an atheist, he looked upon himself as a member of the great family of man, and as such, according to the dictates of natural conscience, he conducted himself in general with integrity and propriety towards his fellow creatures. Now suppose, I say, this man renounces his former atheistical principles, and embraces the Hindoo religion, will any beneficial effect, I ask, be produced by this change upon his moral character? He will undoubtedly be required to perform a variety of ablutions and other useless ceremonies, but no good moral effect, I apprehend, will accrue as the fruit of the religion he has embraced. But suppose, for a moment, that this man, instead of becoming a Hindoo, becomes a Christian, and the scene is at once reversed. A moral change in his character will then take place, which in figurative

der the form of Christno Kallee, and the history from which it originates. This form of Christno may justly be called a personification of every vice; and if we cannot expect a nation to be better than its gods, we must of course, on this principle, so long as the Hindoos adhere to such a demoralizing system of religious worship, naturally expect their moral characters to be stained with every vice.

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language well deserves to be called, " a new birth :"—he will, if a true Christian, " be born again of the Spirit of God,"—renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil—crucify the flesh, with its affections and lusts—pass from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Under the genuine influence of Christian principles, he will set his affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; and habitually, as the great business, and most important end of life, " follow after holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." By becoming a Christian, he will become a better father, a better husband, a better subject, a better friend, and will uniformly endeavour, as the fruit of his religion, to discharge, in the fear of God, all the duties of public, social, and domestic life.

Here then we have the moral effect of the two systems (i. e. Hindooism and Christianity) brought into comparison with each other: and as a candid enquirer after truth, I must say, that whilst I am, by the moral change which Christianity always effects upon those who receive it in truth and sincerity, convinced and confirmed in the belief of its divine authority; so, on the other hand, I am constrained, not only on account of its producing no good moral effect upon its votaries, but also from a variety of other reasons, constrained to avow my utter disbelief of the divine authority of Hindooism; because in whatever way I view it, I can see nothing which appears to me worthy of, or which in any respect harmonizes with, the glorious and exalted character of its professed Author.

Section 4.

The Characters most in repute among the Hindoos.

The assertion which I have made, that Hindooism proposes no perfection of character, and contains no principles calculated to produce any good moral effect, will, I apprehend, be contradicted by many of the advocates of that religion. They will deny my position by asserting, that it not only requires perfection of character, but that

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many who have attained to this perfection are to be found amongst the Hindoos. But, on enquiring where the characters possessed of these high attainments are to be found, I shall be pointed to the ascetics—to the men who have renounced the comforts of civil and domestic life—who have retired into woods and uninhabitated parts of the earth, and by inuring themselves to a variety of pains, enduring privations, &c. live in the constant mortification of their earthly affections.

In reference to the supposed perfection of these ascetics, I reply, that the man who courageously meets his foe, who stands his ground in the day of battle, and comes off a conqueror, is undoubtedly more to be applauded than the man who runs away. Now the world is this enemy of the human race—an enemy which men must ever be conflicting with, during the period of their residence on earth: but these Hindoo ascetics, instead of standing their ground, and endeavouring to overcome this common foe, cowardly run away from him. Instead, therefore, of looking upon these as perfect characters, I rather look upon them as wicked* beyond the ordinary class of men. We are all members of one great family, and required by God, each of us in our proper station, to perform our individual duty, by assisting and benefitting our fellow-creatures to the utmost of our power. These Hindoo ascetics, however, seem to overlook this important end of their existence, because by their manner of life they place themselves in such circumstances, as to be unable to perform any social or relative duty whatsoever. Such

* I allude to the wickedness of which these men are guilty, in separating themselves from the habitations of civil society, which is undoubtedly a breach of the second commandment, which says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." It is also an act of rebellion against God's instituted order of government in the natural world. To this also I might add the actual wickedness of which many of them (notwithstanding their apparent sanctity) are guilty. A Hindoo ascetic in the Upper Provinces, who has been for many years in high repute, was lately detected in having several women secreted, by whom he has had a large family of children, in his professed state of seclusion and celibacy.

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a man's father or brother's house may be on fire—his nearest and dearest relations may be dying for want of food or medicine, or a thousand other calamities may have befallen them, and they may perish for want of that assistance which, merely from the habits of life which he has adopted, he is unable to afford them. In short, if such a man have any merit, it is only negative—it is merely the goodness of a stock or a stone: he can neither be a good subject, a good son, a good friend, nor any thing else; but is in fact a piece of mere useless lumber in the world, from whom no person whatever can possibly derive the least benefit. It is undoubtedly the duty of all men to mortify their earthly affections and sinful inclinations, because God has commanded it. If, however, it be requisite thus to retire from the world in order to accomplish this, then it is the duty of all men (as all are sinners) thus to retire, and forsake the habitations of civil society. But what, I ask, would be the effect which would result from the universal adoption of such a line of conduct? Business of course would in this case cease to be carried on—cultivation of the ground could no longer be continued—all the common avocations of life must cease, and the human race, as the necessary consequence, must shortly become extinct.

Contrast then for a moment this destructive system with the means inculcated in the Bible, and adopted by the Christian, for the mortification of his carnal propensities and sensual affections. The Christian, instead of running away from the face of his enemy, the world, and neglecting, like the Hindoo ascetics, the duties of social and civilized life, stands his ground—engages in the conflict—watches and prays, according to the Saviour's command, (Mark xiv. 38.) and through the strength of divine grace gains a complete victory over it. He is in the world, and not of the world: he loves not the world, neither the things that are in the world. He possesses a faith which enables him to overcome the world (1 John v. 4.), which purifies his heart (Acts xv. 9.), works by love (Gal. v. 6.),

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and so far as he is under its influence, enables him to cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God, (2 Cor. vii. 1.)

In short, he crucifies the flesh, with the affections and lusts, and reduces to practice that long list of moral precepts previously quoted from the Bible: he moulds his conduct, and endeavours to regulate his affections, according to the rules there laid down; and never satisfied with present attainments, presses uniformly forward towards that entire perfection which the Bible requires. I leave, therefore, the candid reader to judge whether this perfection in every spiritual and moral excellence—a perfection which comports with the due performance of every relative and social duty—or whether that perfection (if it deserve to be so called) which consists in abandoning our fellow-creatures to misery and want, and in neglecting all the ordinary avocations of life, is the most rational; and which of the two is the most worthy of God to command, and of men's endeavours to attain: and in this way, by instituting a comparison between the Bible and the Hindoo Shasters, considering them as respectively inculcating these opposite principles, he will be able to form his own opinion of the weight which ought to be attached to the evidence by which their respective claims to divine authority are supported.

Section 5.

General concluding Remarks on the internal Evidences.

Having brought forward that impregnable body of moral evidence which to my own mind is a satisfactory confirmation of the truth and divine authority of the Christian Scriptures, I shall now proceed, and with four general remarks bring this part of the subject to a conclusion.

1. A candid reader of the Bible will ever be ready to acknowledge, that it is a work so excellent and complete, that it is every way worthy of its divine Author: in short,

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whilst imperfection characterizes all the works of men, it is no where to be found in the Bible. Now if this superior and excellent book be not of divine authority, then it of course follows that it must be the work of men; and according to this supposition, we must come to this absurd, unreasonable, and blasphemous conclusion, that men, whilst they are infinitely inferior to God in every other respect, have nevertheless equalled him in this, i. e. they have made a Shaster which it is impossible to improve upon—a Shaster which is in every respect so superior and perfect, that God himself, we may almost venture to assert, could not add to its utility, beauty, or excellence.

2. I have before given a short view of the purity and excellency of the precepts which the Bible contains, and stated at length the beneficial effect produced by it upon the moral character of thousands who have received it, and submitted to its instructions. How then, I ask, can such excellent fruits be accounted for as having attended the reception of the Bible, if it be false? It professes to be a revelation from Deity; but if this be not true, and its claims cannot be substantiated, it then follows, as a natural consequence, that it has originated in forgery, deception, and lies, which no reasonable man can possibly believe, because it is utterly impossible to reconcile this supposition with the superlatively beneficial effects which have universally resulted from its circulation in the world. "A good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and an evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit." Let the Bible, therefore, be brought to this, as the test of its truth; and in the application of this principle, by the fruit which it has produced, both the excellency of its nature, and the divinity of its origin, must necessarily be acknowledged.

3. The authors of the Bible must have been either good or bad men: but nothing can be more unreasonable and contradictory than to associate them with the latter, because their work is in every respect so utterly contrary to the general productions of such characters; that is, bad men could never have written a book which condemns

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their own conduct so entirely as the Bible does—a book so inimitably pure, and full of such excellent, holy, and benevolent precepts as the Bible uniformly contains. If, therefore, they cannot with propriety be associated with characters of this description, it then of course follows, that we must, as the only alternative, acknowledge that they were good men: and this acknowledgment unavoidably involves the truth and divine authority of the book which they have written. There can be no goodness, when truth is wanting. If, therefore, they were good men, they must consequently be true men; and on this principle, the testimony which they have given that they wrote the Bible by the special direction and authority of God, we are in reason bound to believe. But if the truth of this conclusion be denied, we are then by necessity obliged to admit, that instead of being true and good men, they were a set of wicked, lying impostors, such as the world has never seen, either before or since: a supposition which it is utterly impossible to reconcile with the various characteristic marks of truth which are contained in their writings.

4. The majority of the writers of the Bible were men in ordinary situations in life, especially the writers of the New Testament. Originally they were only common mechanics, possessed of no extraordinary abilities, and in general destitute of the benefits which arise from a learned education. Now if they were not, according to their own testimony, authorized by God to write the sacred Scriptures, it then follows, by a counter parity of reasoning, that they were a company of wicked lying impostors. But by this supposition we are brought into a most inexplicable dilemma, i. e. we are necessitated, on this principle, to acknowledge, that these wicked, lying impostors, although they naturally possessed no extraordinary abilities, and enjoyed no superior acquired advantages, have nevertheless composed and written a book, containing a most perfect and complete system of morals—which is without defect—evinces a correct and universal ac-

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quaintance with mankind—is infinitely superior to all the productions and most elaborate works of the most learned philosophical men who ever wrote on the subject, and which has been productive of the most wonderful and astonishing effects in the reformation of mankind, so far as they have received and submitted to its precepts. This conclusion, therefore, which is the necessary consequence arising from the supposition that the Bible is an imposition, is so absurd and unreasonable, that it is utterly unworthy of an attempt to refute it. But these (otherwise inexplicable) difficulties are all reconciled, and its superiority and excellence at once accounted for, if we acknowledge its divine authority, and assent to the testimony of its writers, that it came not by the will of men, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The man who admits of this conclusion, who seeks the assistance of divine grace—who submits his understanding to its instructions, bows his will to its precepts, and submits his judgment to its direction—will not be left to remain in darkness and doubt as to the truth of its claims; he will, according to its promise (1 John v. 10.), soon have "the witness in himself," and find, by happy experience, that it is able to make men wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. (2 Tim. iii. 15.)

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PART II.

THE HISTORICAL AND AUXILIARY EVIDENCES FOR THE DIVINE AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE, AND THE PREPONDERANCY OF THESE EVIDENCES TO ANY OF A SIMILAR NATURE WHICH CAN BE BROUGHT FORWARD IN SUPPORT OF THE CLAIMS OF THE Hindoo Shasters.

IN the preceding part of this work, I have, according to the first of the two rules which at the commencement I brought forward as the principles of the investigation about to be entered upon, instituted a comparison between the Bible and the Hindoo Shasters, and by the application of this rule to the contents of each, endeavoured to ascertain the truth or falsehood of their respective claims. I shall now proceed to examine, in the following chapters, according to rule 2d, The credibility of the witnesses by whom the divine authority of the Christian Scriptures is attested; and by continuing the comparison as before, endeavour not only to shew the solid evidence from miracles, prophecy, &c. on which the truth of the Bible rests, but at the same time endeavour to prove, on account of their deficiency of this evidence, the falsehood of those claims which the Hindoo Shasters make to the same high and undisputed authority.

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CHAPTER I.

OF MIRACLES.

Principles of the Argument derived from Miracles.

Miracles are events which occur contrary to the established order of nature, and cannot, as they are above the power of natural causes, be attributed to them. They can in fact only be wrought by the power and immediate interposition of God; and therefore, as is evident from observation, are not events of daily occurrence, or such as men have any reason ordinarily or frequently to expect. God, however, whenever he sees proper, can, according to circumstances, display his power in working, or causing such miracles to be wrought by the hands of his servants; but in cases of such extraordinary divine interposition, it is always reasonable to suppose that there is some great, wise, and holy end, worthy of the character and attributes of God to be effected. Without this we have no reason to expect his interposition; nor ought any credit to be attached to any statements or assertions which men make to the display of such power in miraculous interferences, unless they can prove that the interposition stated was to effect some important and benevolent purpose. But if the end to be accomplished be worthy of the high character of God, and connected with the general welfare of mankind, and if miracles be in any measure requisite for the accomplishment of that end, we may in that case rather suppose that they would, than that they would not be wrought. On the ground, therefore, of this principle, I hesitate not to assert the truth of the miracles recorded in the New Testament; and to say, that the religion therein revealed, and which they were wrought to confirm, is worthy of all acceptation; i. e. these miracles are in accordance with the character and attributes of God. The end designed to be effected by them was the general wel-

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fare of mankind: they were requisite at the time they were wrought, for the propagation of the Christian religion in the world; and are, as will appear from the following account of them, attested by such solid and satisfactory evidence, that no doubt whatever can reasonably be entertained of their reality, or of the divine authority of that holy religion, the truth of which is, on the proof of their reality, sufficiently and satisfactorily established by them.

Section 1.

The Evidence for the divine Authority of the New Testament, arising from the Number, Variety, and Nature of the Miracles therein recorded.

In the New Testament, we have accounts of more than 50 miracles which were wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by his apostles, through a power which he communicated to them. These miracles were not of one or two kinds, but were extremely diversified in their nature. A variety of diseases, such as lameness, deafness, dumbness, blindness, with many other evils incident to humanity, were cured by them with a touch or a word. They healed the sick, they cast out devils, they raised the dead: nature, animate and inanimate; the visible and the invisible world, were all successively the objects of their miraculous operations. But is not simply these miracles themselves which demand our notice: the witnesses before whom they were wrought, and the solidity of the proofs by which they are attested, also require our attention. Nature, it is evident from observation, is always slow in its operations: the miracles, therefore, recorded in the New Testament cannot be attributed to any combination of natural causes or fortuitous arrangement of events, because they were in general accidental in circumstances and instantaneous in operation, but always permanent in effects. Had these miracles been wrought in private, or only in the presence of those who were friendly to the doctrines they

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were designed to confirm, we might, without any breach of charity, have doubted their reality. But we find, on examining the records by which they are attested, that the reverse was the case. "The works that I do" (said Christ, John v. 36, referring to the miracles which he had wrought) "bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me." And in 2 Cor. xii. 12, the apostle tells the members of that church, that the signs of an apostle (i. e. a variety of miracles) were wrought by him amongst them, "in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds." Now the persons to whom the apostle thus wrote, had called in question the truth of his apostolic mission; and to these miracles which had been wrought amongst them he referred, as a confirmation of it. The appeal of Christ to the same miraculous operations was made to those who were decidedly opposed to him, and most inveterate enemies to the religion which they were designed to establish; and yet neither in one case nor the other, do we find the truth of these miracles disputed. The uniform silence, therefore, of both parties proves that such miracles actually were wrought—that they were wrought publicly, both before friends and enemies—were open to investigation—and were so convincing and evident, as to be utterly indisputable. Several of the enemies of Christ, influenced by malice, as we are informed, Mark iii. 22, blasphemously asserted, that his miracles were wrought by the power of the devil; but the fact of their having actually been wrought, they never attempted to deny: and as the object of these men was to injure the cause of Christianity, and prevent, if possible, its spread in the world, we may be fully certain that could they in any way have denied the truth of the miracles on which its credibility rested, instead of attempting, as they did, in a thousand other ways to ruin its interests, they would at once have resorted to this, as being the most likely method of accomplishing their object. But instead of doing this, we find, that many of the men who in the first instance opposed and persecuted the gospel, on the conviction of the truth of its miracles, afterwards embraced it: on the

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ground of this conviction their Christian characters were formed; and on the same principle they submitted to unheard of pains and privations, and ultimately to death itself, in order to defend its truths, and accelerate its interests.

There is also another circumstance, by which the reality of the Christian miracles is abundantly confirmed, viz. their having never been denied or objected to by any of the numerous apostates from Christianity. For instance, had Christ been an impostor, or had there been any kind of deception or fraud in the miracles which he wrought, it of course must have been known to his immediate disciples, to whom the arduous task of propagating the Christian religion was delegated. We may therefore in this case reasonably suppose, that when Judas betrayed the founder of this religion, he would, in order to justify his own infamous conduct, have discovered the secret, and published the fraud to the world. Again, Constantine, Emperor of Rome, having embraced the Christian religion, his nephew Julian embraced it likewise; not (as is generally supposed) because he was convinced of its truth, but because he was heir to the throne, and considered that he would, by becoming a Christian, please the reigning prince, which, as a matter of course, would be favourable to his views of succession. He had, however, no sooner obtained possession of the imperial throne, than he threw off the mask, by renouncing Christianity, becoming on idolater: and though, in order to justify his own conduct, he opposed, and afterwards wrote against Christianity, yet he never attempted to falsify, or even to question the truth of the miracles recorded in the New Testament, nor impeached in any other way the veracity of the sacred writers. Now, had there been any fraud or duplicity connected with the history of the Christian miracles, he, having been initiated into the secrets of Christianity, must of course have been acquainted with it; and would undoubtedly, in vindication of his own conduct, have communicated this information to the world. A variety of other examples of a similar kind might also be

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brought forward, as many in the days of persecution renounced the gospel, which they had previously embraced in order to save their lives: but not one single instance is left on record, of any who thus renounced it having ever impeached the veracity of the inspired penmen, or attempted to prove that the miracles recorded in the New Testament were false or fabulous statements. We are told, in the 3d chap. of John, that Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night, and said unto him: "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." And again, in Acts iv. 15, 16, we are informed, that when two of the disciples of Christ were brought before the Jewish Sanhedrim, the members of this court "conferred among themselves, saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell at Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it." The manner in which these rulers of the Jews and enemies of the gospel are here stated to have expressed themselves, with reference to the reality of the miracle referred to, and which is recorded in the preceding verses, is worthy of observation. Their declaration of their inability to deny it, evidently proves, that instead of conceding the truth of it in the manner they did, they would have denied it, had there been any possibility, or even plausible ground on which they could have founded the denial. It is therefore sufficiently evident, from this concession of the enemies, as well as from the testimony of the friends of Christianity, that the truth of the miracles recorded by the Evangelists is a thing which was never disputed. We have here the evidence of all parties; and this universal acknowledgment of the truth and the actual occurrence of the facts recorded, is a satisfactory and incontrovertible proof of the genuineness and authenticity of those scripture histories wherein these miracles are recorded.

The argument, therefore, which is founded upon these miracles, must, if by these observations we are prepared

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to appreciate it, be acknowledged to be simple and conclusive:—this argument is as follows. It is satisfactorily ascertained, by the most indubitable evidence, that the miracles recorded in the Christian scriptures were actually wrought, in exact conformity to the testimony which is there given—they were wrought in attestation of the truth and divine authority of the Christian religion—the object was connected with the greatest and best interests of man, and of sufficient importance to be worthy of the divine interposition. On these principles, therefore, we are sufficiently warranted to conclude, that Christianity is true; and to assert that the divine authority of the Bible, which contains the records of that holy religion, is by these miraculous interpositions so satisfactorily confirmed and substantiated, that all who reject it will most certainly be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." 2 Thess. i. 9.

Should the enquiring reader doubt the correctness of this conclusion, or be at all disposed to question the connection which there is between the reality of the Christian miracles and the truth of the Christian religion, I request his candid attention to the following illustration, which bears upon the subject, and will tend to convince him, that the inference which in this respect I have drawn is both natural and correct.—Suppose a company of wicked impostors agree to forge and circulate through the country a letter in the king's name, containing a variety of commands and instructions, to which all his subjects are required, on pain of death in case of their omission, to attend—will the king, when he hears of this circumstance, put his seal to, and confirm this infamous and deceitful letter? Will he not rather endeavour to apprehend and bring to condign punishment the villains, who have been guilty of so notorious an imposition? Now apply this illustration to the subject under investigation. The miracles which are recorded in the New Testament, and which were wrought to attest the truth of Christian-

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ity, were the seal by which Jehovah, the Prince of the kings of the earth, confirmed the message of the apostles and others of the first publishers of Christianity. But in case they had been impostors, and their message a falsehood; is it, I ask, likely that he would, by communicating to them the power to work these miracles, have sealed their testimony, and succeeded their undertaking? Would he not rather have followed them with some terrible judgment, as a punishment for their impiety, and daring wickedness? The inference is plain—the conclusion is clear. Had they been deceivers, although in the present life they might perhaps have escaped these judgments, yet (considering the circumstances under which they laboured) success would never have crowned their exertions. As impostors, they never could have surmounted the difficulties which they had to contend with at the commencement of their enterprize; and we may reasonably infer, that in this case, both their names and their labours would long since have sunk into deserved and perpetual oblivion. But when we survey the state of the matter, and find that the reverse was the case—that God, instead of thus visiting them with condign punishment, and frustrating their exertions, in the most extraordinary manner confirmed their testimony, and succeeded their exertions:—we must, if free from prejudice, and open to conviction, be ready to acknowledge, that this divine interposition is a self-evident and indubitable proof of the truth of Christianity, and a confirmation of its evidence, so solid, satisfactory, and convincing, that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Section 2.

Collateral Observations referring to the Christian Miracles.

On reading the foregoing account of the nature, number, and variety of the miracles recorded in the New Testament, the mind is naturally anxious for a solution to the query, why it was, if these miracles, according to

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the statement given, were so numerous and convincing, that so many of the Jews, who perpetually beheld and had an opportunity of examining them, instead of being convinced, as might naturally be expected from their being eye-witnesses of the facts recorded, still continued in their disbelief and rejection of the gospel? To this I reply, that many of the eye-witnesses of these miracles were, as appears from the testimony of Nicodemus, convinced of the undoubted truth of Christianity, yet still continued to reject it, not on account of the deficiency of its evidence, but because it was opposed to their worldly views and interests—because it prescribed duties, and demanded sacrifices, which they were utterly unwilling to perform. The conduct of those inconsiderate men, though painful to reflect on, is by no means calculated to excite our astonishment. Multitudes are found in every country, who are ever ready to sacrifice the concerns of the soul to those of the body; and the folly of men in rejecting the gospel, and preferring the interests of time to those of eternity, we must, if we are observant of their habits and pursuits, acknowledge to be a fact of common and every-day occurrence. Exclusive of the characters who rejected the gospel on the aforesaid principle, there were doubtless others who had an equal opportunity of witnessing the miracles recorded by the Evangelists, but who still continued in the neglect of its truth, because they never duly considered the matter, or attended with seriousness of mind, as they ought to have done, to that weight of evidence which is derived from them in support of its divine authority. This apathy and indifference to the evidences of Christianity is a common and a prevailing sin; and it is undoubtedly to be attributed to this, that the majority of mankind continue to neglect and disbelieve it. For the confirmation of the truth of this assertion, I only need refer the reader to the conduct of the inhabitants of this country. The truth or falsehood of a religion, it must be acknowledged, involves the most awful and important consequences: now although they are

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daily told this, and that the religion to which they now adhere is false, and the one which is revealed in the Bible alone is true; and that if they reject the latter, and continue in their adherence to the former, their ruin in the eternal world, as the consequence of their conduct, is inevitable; yet notwithstanding this, the great majority of them, as is evident from observation, still go on from day to day, manifesting the most astonishing apathy and indifference to all that is brought before them on the subject, without so much as once examining the evidences by which the two religions support their respective claims. We are, from the multiplicity of these painful facts which come before us, necessitated to acknowledge, that it is immaterial how weighty and convincing the evidences of Christianity may be in themselves, if these evidences are not candidly investigated. If a due and serious attention is not paid to them, and if the mind is not sufficiently free from prejudice, and open to receive the conviction which their clearness and sufficiency are calculated to produce, no beneficial effect can be expected to follow. And it is not, as it respects the truths of the gospel, the weight of evidence, but a candid investigation of, and due attention to, that evidence, which is required to produce conviction in the mind, and induce the enquirer to receive it.

Perhaps it may be observed, on the other hand, if notwithstanding the infidelity of some, numerous instances can nevertheless be brought forward of the beneficial effects which resulted from the miracles of the gospel in the first ages of Christianity, why have they not for these reasons been perpetuated and continued to the present day? To this I reply, that the perpetuity of miracles would be calculated to destroy their effect, and deprive them of that beneficial influence which arises from them, when only occasionally operated. For instance, suppose the sun were to discontinue his visits to the earth for the space of 100 years, and the inhabitants during this period had no other light but that of the moon. Suppose that at

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the expiration of the 100 years, the sun were again unexpectedly to visit the earth; the inhabitants then living, not having previously seen him, would consider his appearance as a most wonderful miracle: but being, as they now are, daily favoured with his visits, no astonishment is excited, nor any thing miraculous supposed to be connected with his appearance. So, to apply this illustration to the subject before us, if we daily saw the dead reanimated and raised to life, the blind restored to sight, and men cured in a supernatural way of the most obstinate and dangerous diseases, the commonness of these events would destroy the idea of any thing miraculous being connected with them; and however extraordinary they might be, we should nevertheless look upon them with as much indifference, as we now do upon the most ordinary occurrences of common life.

I further observe, that as it respects the truth of Christianity, all we can possibly require is sufficient evidence; leaving the nature and degree of that evidence, as it is proper we should, to the wisdom and goodness of God. Provided this is given, the reception of it becomes our necessary duty. On this principle, therefore, I hesitate not to assert, that the evidence for the divine authority of Christianity, which we have from scripture testimony and other sources, is abundantly sufficient to remove all our sceptical reasonings, to satisfy all our reasonable enquiries, and lead us, under the conviction of its indubitable truth, to bow with reverence and submission to its supreme and universal authority.

The circumstances in which those to whom the gospel was first addressed were placed, were very different from ours. The evidence arising from miracles was then, if not the only, at least the most satisfactory and convincing evidence which they could receive. But the different situation in which we are placed—the evidence arising from indubitable testimony—the completion of the canon of scripture, and the conviction which the high tone of its moral precepts is calculated to produce—and the firm

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establishment which the Christian religion has now obtained in the world—are sufficient evidence for us, and therefore the continuance of miraculous interference is now altogether unnecessary.

In reference to this latter observation, viz. the firm footing and wide spread which Christianity has now obtained in the world, I request the reader's attention to the following illustration, which I bring forward to shew, that miracles are no longer required to accelerate its interests. When a little child is first learning to walk, it is supported, assisted, and directed in various ways by the parent, as its strength and present state of progress may require: but when the child has learnt the use of its limbs, and acquired sufficiency of strength to walk alone, these extraordinary means, being no longer necessary, are of course discontinued, and it is left to pursue its own course in the exercise of the ability which it has acquired. So the Christian religion, at the period to which I refer, was as it were but in the infancy of its days; and, like the little child just spoken of, it then required for its confirmation and establishment, the extraordinary and miraculous support which attended it: but as it has now obtained a firm footing in the world, and as its divine authority is abundantly proved by the most satisfactory testimonial and moral evidence; miracles, being no longer necessary to aid its progress, or establish the truth of its claims, are, on account of their further inutility, as might naturally be expected, wisely discontinued.

Section 3.

Of the Hindoo Miracles.

As the human mind is fertile in raising objections against the divine authority of Christianity, it is not improbable but that some persons, under the influence of this unhappy disposition, may endeavour to invalidate the weight of the evidence for its truth brought forward in

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the foregoing section, by saying, that the Hindoo Shasters contain various accounts of wonderful and astonishing miracles, which have been wrought by their Moonies and others; and therefore the evidence for the truth of both religions stands upon the same foundation. To this objection I reply, that although such accounts are contained in the Hindoo Shasters, yet they are deficient in proof as to the truth of the facts recorded; i. e. the fact of such miracles having actually been wrought is not sufficiently authenticated; and therefore we cannot in justice be charged with a breach of charity when we assert, that as the accounts of these miracles cannot be substantiated, they are, we have reason to believe, merely vague statements, which have no foundation in truth*. It was

* The New Testament professes to have been written about 1800 years ago, and the fact of its having actually been written at the time specified is confirmed by the testimony of various contemporary historical writers, some of whom were friendly, whilst others, and especially those who wrote in the earliest ages of Christianity, were decidedly hostile to its interests. In the various works of those profane authors which were written before that period, we have no account or allusion whatever to the existence of such a book. But from that time down to the present day, we find them, in the various works which in successive generations they have been constantly writing, referring to, and in many instances quoting the express words of the New Testament. By these histories, therefore, which have been successively handed down to us, the authors have unintentionally proved, that it was written at the exact period specified; and also, so far as they have quoted its contents, have borne their testimony to the truth of its histories. But if we examine into the origin of the Hindoo Shasters, we shall find that they are totally destitute of any correspondent testimony of this kind to support the truth of their historical statements. We are required to believe the facts therein recorded upon the bare statement of the Shaster, destitute as it is of all intrinsic evidence, and of any thing, either direct or collateral, to support the truth of its records. As it respects the majority of their Shasters, the characters of the persons by whom, and also the period when they were written, is altogether unknown; and, exclusive of what is derived from their own contents, on which no dependance with propriety can be placed, no evidence whatever can be brought forward in confirmation of the truth of their histories. We are, therefore, from the doubtful nature of their contents—their deficiency in internal marks of truth—and their being totally destitute of any evidence arising from the testimony of collateral writers, sufficiently warranted to reject their historical records as fabulous, unsubstantiated statements, which cannot be depended on.

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extremely easy for any person, placed in the circumstances in which the Hindoo legislators and other noted characters among them are represented to have been when they wrought their miracles, to impose upon an ignorant populace, and make them believe that a miracle was wrought, when no such thing was actually the case. The people before whom these miracles are said to have been wrought, were extremely ignorant; they highly venerated their legislators; they were entirely devoted to their interests; they implicitly relied on all their instructions, and were inclined, without examining for themselves, to believe the whole of what these legislators told them: and the legislators, being undoubtedly men of abilities, and conscious of the prevailing credulity, could for the better establishment of their own authority, easily take the advantage of it by thus imposing upon the people. Impositions of this kind have frequently occurred in Roman Catholic countries. The people in these countries are generally very superstitious, have a high veneration for, and are entirely under the dominion of the priests: and the wicked priests, taking the advantage of these circumstances, have frequently imposed upon their credulity, and repeatedly deceived them by a variety of pretended miracles. It is satisfactorily proved, from the state and conduct of many of the inhabitants of this country in the present day, that the senses of a weak and credulous people may in various ways be easily deluded. We see them make an idol of stone, or wood, or clay, which is, as every man of understanding will allow, nothing but a mere senseless block; and yet many of them actually believe, that by the ceremonies of consecration and incantation, life is imparted to this idol. The spirit of the god, they say, after these ceremonies, takes up his residence in it: and this delusive idea, operating upon their fancy, actually leads them to believe, that whilst engaged in acts of worship, they can see the idol's features change—his limbs move—and signs of sorrow and of joy, of approbation and disapprobation, &c. in his countenance: and in various other simi-

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lar ways do they suffer themselves, through the influence of imagination, to be deceived and imposed upon, contrary to the evidence of their senses.

The accounts of the miracles which are said to have been wrought by the Hindoo legislators and others, will bear no comparison with the accounts of the miracles wrought by Christ and his apostles, which are recorded in the Christian Scriptures. The Christian miracles were not wrought before a credulous people—a people devoted to the interests of those who wrought them, and inclined to believe all that they asserted. If we diligently peruse the evangelical history, we shall find that it was quite the reverse: they were wrought, as we are there informed, before the most inveterate enemies—a prejudiced people, and a persecuting government and priesthood, whose great object was to overthrow the cause which the men, by whose instrumentality these miracles were wrought, had espoused. But all who are said to have witnessed the Hindoo miracles were friendly to the cause which their legislators and other celebrated characters, the pretended workers of these miracles, designed to propagate. The Christian miracles were also wrought, at the introduction of the gospel into the world, with a design to effect its establishment, when no person believed it, but when all classes, from the highest to the lowest, were opposed to and inclined to persecute it. But the Hindoo miracles (if any such miracles ever were wrought) were wrought not to establish that religion, but after it was established, and had gained a firm footing in the world. The miracles of Christianity were wrought to establish a religion which none were desirous to receive:—those of Hindooism, when that religion was established, and all had received it. The former were all of the most benevolent and holy kind---were never wrought for display, or to effect any private end, and were therefore in every respect worthy of their great Author:—but the latter were wrought upon very different principles, and for very different purposes,—in revenge, for display,

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or under the influence of some interested motive:—not, as the Christian miracles were, to save men's lives, but to destroy them. They are also, as it respects the majority of them, connected with some kind of obscenity or another; whilst others are ridiculous and childish, and of such a monstrous and absurd nature, that they are utterly unworthy of the divine interposition, and therefore no possible credit reasonably can, or ought to be attached to them*.

For these causes therefore, I am, on the ground of reason and common sense, necessitated to avow my utter disbelief of every thing which is recorded in the Hindoo Shasters, as to the miracles said to be wrought by their legislators and other celebrated characters, to whom they attach so much veneration. Admitting, however, that such miracles actually were wrought, Hindooism gains nothing by them; because they were wrought, as before observed, merely in display or revenge, or from some other unhallowed and improper motive, and with no design whatever to establish the truth of its divine authority. But on examining the miracles of Christianity, we find them both altogether distinct in their nature from those of Hindooism, and likewise established on the most indubitable testimony, of which evidence the latter are entirely destitute. These miracles were moreover wrought in attestation of the divine authority of the Christian religion. Whilst, therefore, the miracles of Hindooism leave (on the admission of their truth) that religion as totally destitute of evidence as it would be without them, those

* We are told, that one of the Debtas with a plough threw Delhi into the river. Others churned the sea, using a serpent instead of a rope, and a mountain for a churning-pole. The seas of which the Shasters speak were all, it is said, dug by the sons of one man. One Debta drank all the water of these seven seas, and left them completely dry; and another drank all the water in the Ganges. A variety of other miraculous stories of a similar nature are recorded in the Shasters, so inconsistent and ridiculous, that our compassion is excited towards deluded people who, refusing to exercise their reason, are so weak and credulous as to believe such monstrous absurdities.

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of Christianity, being established on the most solid basis, form around this holy religion an impregnable barrier; and attest its truth in a manner so convincing and satisfactory, that all the arts of reasoning which sophistry and malice have hitherto brought against it, instead of undermining, have only set in a more striking and prominent point of view, the certainty and glory of its divine original.

CHAPTER II.

OF PROPHECY.

Of the Argument derived from Prophecy.

Prophecies are revelations of those future and distant events which, according to the common course of things, must ever be kept secret from mankind. These events, being as they are contingent, and immediately under the control of the Divine Being, must, previous to their accomplishment, necessarily remain in obscurity, unless some favoured individual receive a communication from God relative to them, accompanied by a permission to make them known to the world. If therefore any man (or body of men) write a book full of circumstantial accounts of such contingent future and distant events, and say that he received his information from God, and was authorized by him to write these prophetic records; and if the events, as they occur, in every particular answer the predictions, and exactly harmonize with what he had previously written on the subject;—I am undoubtedly bound to acknowledge the truth of his declarations, and believe that he wrote, according to his own assertion, immediately under the influence of a divine inspiration. This illustration is applicable to the prophecies contain-

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ed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament. We find dispersed throughout the whole of the historical records of these books, a number of such prophecies as I have here described. The authors tell us, that they were divinely inspired to write them. As far as they refer to past circumstances, so far they have, according to the prediction, been most minutely fulfilled. This exact agreement, therefore, between the prediction and the event, which, with the argument derived from it, I have particularly enlarged upon in the following section, is a satisfactory and convincing confirmation of the truth of the assertion of these writers, and a sufficient warrant for us to receive and acknowledge the undoubted divine authority of the Scriptures in which these prophecies are contained.

Section 1.

View of the Prophecies recorded in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

The prophecies contained in the Bible, which, with their variety and fulfilment, are the subjects to be considered in the present section, may be divided into three classes. 1st. Those which have already been fulfilled. 2d. Those which are progressively fulfilling in the present day; and, 3d. Those which yet remain to be fulfilled in future ages of the world. In considering, therefore, the weight of evidence which arises from these prophecies, I shall discuss them according to the order here specified, beginning,

1st. With those that have already been fulfilled. The principal prophecies recorded in the Old Testament, and which have already been fulfilled, refer to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. These prophecies, although they were written many years before his incarnation, are so clear, that they cannot be misunderstood; and so numerous, that were the whole of them collected and put together in due order, we should find them to contain a full and correct history of the principal events connected with his life, sufferings, and death.

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When impostors assume a prophetic character, their predictions are usually delivered in a general and an ambiguous manner: such, however, is not the case with the prophecies recorded in the Bible. They are minute and circumstantial, and, by entering as they do into particulars, have become tangible. Their veracity is thereby laid open to investigation, and with comparative ease they can be applied to the various events to which they respectively relate. It is not, however, requisite that the enquiring reader should be satisfied with a mere assertion on this point: in order, therefore, to convince him of the truth of my observation, I shall proceed to present to his view a short compendium of the Old Testament prophecies which refer to the Saviour; and in doing this, I purpose to begin with those which refer to his incarnation, and shall afterwards endeavour to bring forward in their proper places such as relate to his life, ministry, sufferings, and death. In order also to make the subject explicit, and more easily to be comprehended, I shall state the number of years that each prophecy was written before the events referred to took place; and shew, in parallel lines, the fulfilment of these prophetic predictions in the history of the Redeemer's life, by directing the reader's attention to the several circumstances to which they relate, as they are left on record by the writers of the New Testament.

The following Prophecies refer to his Incarnation.

Gen. iii. 15, written 4004 years before his incarnation.

He is promised as "the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head."

In Deut. xviii. 15, written 1450 years before the incarnation.

He is promised as the antitype of Moses, and the great Prophet of Israel: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee

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of thy brethren like unto me: unto him ye shall hearken.

In Isa. xi. 1, written 740 years previous to his birth;

He is called, in reference to his lineage, the rod of the stem of Jesse, and the branch which should spring out of his roots: and in the following verses, his character, and the peaceful fruits of righteousness by which his reign would be distinguished, are circumstantially described; to which account I refer the reader, as it is too long for insertion here.

In Isa. ix. 6, 7, written 740 years before he assumed human nature;

We have the following descriptive account of the dignity of his character and the glory of his kingdom: "Unto us a child is born; unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end: upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it, with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

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In Isa. vii. 14, written 740 years before he appeared in the world, we are told that he would be born of a virgin. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

In Micah v. 2, written 720 years antecedent to his birth, Bethlehem, a small city in the land of Judea, is stated to be the place where this event, so intimately connected with the welfare of mankind, would occur.

In Zec. ix. 9, written 510 years previous to his appearance in the flesh, the manner of his triumphal entrance into Jersusalem is recorded. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.

In Matt. chap. i. from the 18th to the 25th verse, we are informed, that this prediction was literally fulfilled: and this history of his birth is confirmed by the testimony of the other evangelists, especially by Luke, who has particularly enlarged upon this interesting event in the 1st and 2d chap. of his Gospel.

In the 2d chap. of Matthew, the fulfilment of this prophecy is recorded, with a detailed account of the various circumstances which took place at that city, when by his birth there this prediction received its accomplishment.

In Matt. xxi. Mark xi. and Luke xix. we have three distinct and circumstantial accounts of the event referred to in this prophetic declaration, with a description of the conduct of the people, and the joyful manner in which they received him on that occasion. A very great multitude, we are told, Matt. xxi. 8, spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way: and the multi-

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tudes that went before and that followed, cried, saying, Hosannah to the Son of David; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosannah in the highest.

In reviewing these prophecies, comparing them with the event referred to, and contemplating the universal and literal manner in which they were accomplished, the mind cannot fail to be struck with the strong evidence which is derived from them in support of the truth of divine revelation. I shall now pass on from these to notice various other passages, in which the most minute circumstances connected with the Redeemer's sufferings and death are clearly pointed out: and if we severally compare them with the events to which they refer, as recorded in the evangelists, we shall find that they were all fulfilled with a degree of exactness which demonstratively proves that the authors were not putting their own thoughts or conceptions to paper when they wrote, but that they wrote, according to the testimony which they have given us, under a divine influence; and were evidently guided by Him to whom are known all his works from the beginning.

In Isa. liii. 7. written 706 years before his incarnation, his silence before his enemies and accusers is predicted. "As a sheep," it is said, "before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

In Mark xv, 3, 4, 5, we are told, that when the priests of the Jews accused him before Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea, he answered them nothing. "And Pilate asked him, saying, Answerest thou nothing? behold how many things they witness against thee. But Jesus yet answer-

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In Psalm xli. 9, written 1021 years antecedent to his birth, the base conduct of one of his disciples in betraying him is recorded. "Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up the heel against me."

In Zec. xi. 12, written 510 years before he assumed human nature, thirty pieces of silver is specified as the price for which he would be betrayed.

In Zec. xiii. 7. written 510 years before his incarnation, the dispersion of his disciples in the hour of his extremity is foretold. "Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered.

In Psalm lxix. 21, written 1021 years before he aped nothing, so that Pilate marvelled."

In the 13th chap. of the gospel by John, the treachery of Judas is particularly enlarged on, and the fulfilment of this prophecy exemplified in the base conduct of which he was guilty, in delivering the Redeemer into the hands of the scribes and Pharisees.

In Matt. xxvi. 14, we thus read: "Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, and said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver: and from that time he sought opportunity to betray him."

In Mark xiv. 45th and following verses, the fulfilment of this prediction is recorded. We there read, when the officers of the Jewish Sanhedrim "laid their hands on him, and took him," that his disciples, conscious of their inability to defend him, and alarmed for the safety of their own persons, all forsook him, and fled.

In Matt. xxvii. 33, 34, we are informed by the evan-

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peared in the world, the inspired penman, personifying the Saviour, thus writes: "They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

Psalm xxii. 18, written 1060 years previous to his birth, we thus read: "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture."

Psalm xxii. 16, written 1060 years before the incarnation. "The assembly of wicked men have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet."

Zec. xii. 10, written 500 years before he appeared in human form. "They shall look upon me whom they gelist, that when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, the place of a skull, they gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.

In John xix. 23, the fulfilment of this prediction is thus recorded: "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said, therefore, among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it whose it shall be. These things, therefore, the soldiers did."

Luke xxiii. 33. "When they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him:" which was done by piercing the hands and the feet to a cross beam appropriated to the purpose, and generally used for putting malefactors to death.

John xix. 34. "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and

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have pierced: and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son."

Psalm xxii. 7. written 1060 years previous to his humiliation. "All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."

In Isa. liii. 12, written 706 years before he appeared on earth, his being associated with wicked men, at the time of his death, is predicted. "He was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

In Psalm xvi. 10, written 1060 years before the event occurred, the inspired penman, personifying him, thus speaks in reference to his resurrection: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption."

water: and he that saw it bare record; and his record is true."

Matt. xxvii. 39. "And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others, himself he cannot save."

Mark xv. 25, 27, and 28, we thus read: "And it was the third hour, and they crucified him; and with him they crucify two thieves, the one on his right hand, and the other on his left: and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, He was numbered with the transgressors."

In Acts ii. 13, we are informed, that after the Jews with wicked hands had crucified and slain him, God raised him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it: to which account we have the testimony of the four

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Evangelists, of his having arisen from the dead the third day after his crucifixion.

In addition to the prophecies here enumerated, I refer the reader to the whole of the liii. chapter of Isaiah: which describes so minutely a variety of circumstances in the Redeemer's life, that it is more like a history of events that were past at the time of its being written, than a prediction of such as were then to come; and yet in every particular it exactly agrees with the history of Christ, as recorded in the four Gospels.

There are also in the Bible, besides these prophecies relating to the Saviour, a variety of general prophecies, which refer to the state of various nations of the earth, their rise and fall, and the changes which would and will continue to take place amongst them down to the end of time: and the whole of these predictions, so far as they refer to past and present circumstances, have either received an entire and exact fulfilment, or they are visibly fulfilling at the present time, in the various events which are now taking place in the earth.

If, therefore, on this review of the prophecies that have already received their accomplishment, we apply them to the subject under investigation, the following will be found to be the exact state of the argument. Here are a number of prophecies, which are very minute in description: they refer to a multitude of important and interesting events, which could only be known to God, and which no individual of the human race could possibly have communicated to the world, without having first received a communication from him relative to them:—they were written at various and distant periods of time, yet all of them long before the circumstances alluded to took place:—the writers of them were men of different countries, educations, and habits, and had not, neither could have, as to the majority of them, any communica-

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tion one with another; and yet in all their predictions they perfectly agree with each other, and the events to which they refer were, without a single exception, all fulfilled in the most circumstantial manner: which never could have been, if they had not, according to their own declaration, written by the immediate direction and authority of God.

But, besides the prophecies to which our attention has already been directed, there are two others contained in the Scriptures, which I wish more particularly to dwell upon, viz. the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jewish people, with the termination of their state and polity.

The first of these events was predicted by Christ himself, and is recorded in the xxivth chap. of the gospel by Matthew, the 1st and following verses, and also in the former part of the xiiith chap. of the gospel by Mark, to which scriptures I must refer the reader for any information he may desire upon the subject, as I am obliged in this, as I shall also hereafter be in several other instances, to omit, on account of their length, the insertion of the passages enlarged upon. Now, in reference to this prophecy, I observe two things. 1. The simple fact of Christ's having uttered this prediction, is of itself a strong proof of the divine authority of his mission. The policy of a deceiver is always to court the favour of the people, and carefully to avoid every thing which would tend to make him odious amongst them; and of course, had Christ been a deceiver, he would, in common with the rest of such characters, have adopted this line of policy: in that case, however, such a prophecy as this never could have fallen from his lips. Nothing could possibly make him more unpopular than this prediction was calculated to do—it is a prediction which would excite all the rage and choler of a Jew: and we find, in the event, that this was the effect which it produced; for it was (as we learn from Mark xiv. 58,) by perverting this, or some other expression of a similar kind which they had heard him utter, that they sought accusation against him to put him to death.

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2. When Christ uttered this prophetic declaration, there was not the least sign or probability, according to the external appearance of things, of its being accomplished within so limited a time as 30 or 40 years, which was the period assigned; and yet every jot and tittle, as we find from various records of ancient history, were literally and exactly fulfilled. Christ declared, in reference to the temple, that there should not one stone of it be left upon another. And although from its magnitude, and the stability with which it was built, such a circumstance was then exceedingly unlikely to occur, yet we learn from history that this prediction also received its full accomplishment: for a report being circulated among the Roman soldiers, that a considerable quantity of gold was buried beneath its foundations, they dug them up, with the hope of obtaining this supposed treasure; by which they literally, and to the utmost extent, fulfilled this prediction of the Redeemer respecting it.

The second of the two prophecies which I am now more particularly noticing, is that which relates to the dispersion of the Jewish people, with the destruction of their state and polity. It comprizes a considerable part of the xxviiith chap. of Deuteronomy, which was written more than 1450 years before that event took place. In the xxist chap. of the gospel by Luke, the 20th and following verses, we have a repetition, by the Lord Jesus Christ, of this prophecy, with some enlargement, and the near approach of the period when it would be fulfilled, with various preceding circumstances connected with it, clearly defined.

Let the enquiring reader, therefore, after perusing these predictions in the passages referred to, take into his serious consideration the full and circumstantial manner in which they have been fulfilled—let him also consider how minutely they describe the state of the Jews from the period of their dispersion; and surely he must be ready to acknowledge, that he may with almost as much reason doubt the reality of his own existence, as the divine authority of the book in which these prophecies are contained.

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In fact, the present state of the Jews is a standing miracle —a miracle which is satisfactory, convincing, and undeniable—a proof which is open to the investigation of all who are interested in the enquiry, and demonstrates, beyond all reasonable possibility of a doubt, that the Bible is the word of God.

I now proceed, from remarking on those prophecies which have already received their accomplishment, to notice, secondly, two others, which are, as is evident to every observer, progressively fulfilling, and by which the argument before me is considerably strengthened and elucidated. The first of these prophecies, which was written 2430 years ago, will be found in Jer. x. 11. "The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens." In reference to this inspired declaration, I observe, that when it fell from the lips of the prophet, all the nations of the earth, with the exception of the Jews, were idolaters, and devoted to the worship of the gods whose destruction is here predicted. But this passage has been completely fulfilled, as it respects the whole of the western world. In Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, Sweden, Poland, with various other countries in Europe, these gods have perished, i. e. the inhabitants of these countries have destroyed the idols which their ancestors worshipped—have expunged idolatry from their towns and their cities, and have renounced the service of these fictitious deities for the service of Jehovah, who, being the one living and true God, hath made the earth by his power, established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion. (Jer. x. 12.) The same glorious work also continues to go forward in the present day. The fulfilment of this prophetic declaration is open to ocular investigation. Multitudes of these false gods have been destroyed, and perished from under these heavens, during the last 50 years. The inhabitants of the islands of the South Pacific, half a century ago, were all idolaters: but in the greatest part of these islands, not a

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vestige of idolatry now remains—the idols are destroyed —the worship of the one living and true God is now the basis of their religion, and the kingdom of Christ is set up amongst them. In the remainder of these islands, as well as in various other parts of the heathen world, the idols are daily continuing to perish. And it must be evident to every intelligent observer, who is at all acquainted with the present state of mankind, that the time is not far distant, when idolatry, perpetually losing ground as it is, shall cease to exist, and with its obscenities and delusions, like a tale that is told, vanish from the face of the earth.

The second prophecy which is daily fulfilling under our immediate observation, refers to the universal spread of the gospel: it is recorded in the gospel by Matt. chap. xxiv. 14. "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations." This important and interesting prophecy, which is but the counterpart of the one relating to the universal destruction of idolatry which I have just noticed, is elucidated by a variety of corresponding passages, which refer to the same subject, in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. We are there told, that from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the same, Jehovah's name shall be great among the Gentiles—that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea—that in his name (i. e. the name of Christ) shall the Gentiles trust; and that the heathen shall be given to him for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession. It is not my intention, as I deem it unnecessary, to remark upon these prophecies in general. The quotation which I have given from Matthew, being as it is the most explicit, and one of the last inspired declarations relating to this interesting subject, is the one to which I would more particularly solicit the reader's attention in the following observations. When this important prediction first fell from the lips of Christ, there was not the least prospect or apparent probability of its ever being fulfilled. The gospel had then obtained no foot-

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ing in the world—it had no secular influence to support its claims—it held out no temporal prospects to them that embraced it. Destitute as it was of these advantages to accelerate its interests, it had at the same time to encounter the most fearful opposition. The malice of men, armed with power and influenced by pride, rose up in hostile array, and threatened its extinction at the commencement of its career. Instead of its claims being acknowledged, it was, wherever it went, universally hated and despised: and notwithstanding these disadvantageous circumstances in which it was placed, it had, in order to make its way, to overturn all the long established and deep rooted systems of superstitious and idolatrous worship which every where abounded in the world: and yet, great as these difficulties, and discouraging as these appearances were, it completely effected its purpose. In the first ages of Christianity, its triumphs were general: and if we look at what is now going forward in the earth, and contemplate the exertions which are every where making to disseminate its truths, we may refer, both to the past and the present, as instances of the fulfilment of this inspired declaration. In conformity with this prediction, the gospel has triumphed, is triumphing, and will undoubtedly continue to triumph, until it swallow up all the religions in the world; and the Redeemer, according to the inspired testimony of the Psalmist, shall have dominion from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. (Psalm lxxii. 8.)

From these prophecies, which under our immediate observation are visibly fulfilling, I now pass on to notice, in the third place, two other equally important and interesting prophecies which yet remain to be fulfilled. The first of these the reader will find in Isa. xliii. 5, 6. "Fear not, for I am with thee. I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west. I will say to the north, Give up, and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth." The second relates to the same subject, and is re-

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corded Jer. xxix. 14. "I will be found of you, saith the Lord; and I will turn your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the Lord, and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive." These prophecies, with several others of a similar nature, which, were it necessary, might here be inserted, refer to the restoration of the people of the Jews, after their dispersion, which has already been spoken of, had accomplished the purposes for which God in his providence had permitted it to occur.

It is now about 1800 years since that dispersion took place; and the first of these prophecies was written 750 years, and the second 650 years, before this divine judgment overtook them. In considering these prophecies, it seems natural to suppose, that the reader will enquire, What argument can possibly be drawn from such prophetic declarations as have not yet received their entire accomplishment, to prove the divine inspiration of the Scriptures in which they are contained? With reference, therefore, to the predictions which are the subjects of our present investigation, I answer, that the argument here is derived from the present state of the Jewish people, viewed in connection with these prophecies, as it relates to their future condition in the world. The Jews are scattered almost through every nation upon the face of the earth. They are universally despised on account of their peculiarity. In almost all places where they have taken up their abode, they are persecuted, and treated with cruelty and contempt. They are, therefore, from the circumstances in which they are placed, under the strongest possible temptations to deviate from their own peculiar customs, and to coalesce with the inhabitants of the several countries where they reside; because by doing this they would be free from all the inconveniences to which they are now exposed in consequence of their remaining a separate people, and be advanced to the enjoyment of all the privileges and comforts which the native inhabitants of

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of those countries enjoy. The enquiry, therefore, naturally follows, On what principle are we to account for their continued separation and singularity? How is it, seeing they have now been 1800 years in this uncomfortable and inconvenient state, that they do not, as they are a scattered and a persecuted people, renounce their singular customs, and break down this wall of separation, by intermixing and intermarrying with the natives of the several countries where the different societies of them have taken up their residence. If we examine the Bible, and give credit to its statements, the reason is plain—by it we are taught to believe, that they are under a supernatural and divine influence. The divine Being has a purpose to accomplish respecting them, which renders this continued separation necessary, otherwise it would long since have ceased to exist; and, considering the circumstances under which they are placed, the coalition of which I have spoken must, humanly speaking, have taken place ages ago. The fact is, not one jot or one tittle of God's word can ever remain unfulfilled. This word informs us, that the divine Being purposes to bring them back, and reinstate them again, as a nation, in the land of their forefathers. In order to effect this, they must be kept a separate people: and the providence of God, thus superintending their affairs, and separating them from the nations, with the general aspect of the world, and especially the extensive interest which in several European nations is now excited on their behalf, seem to indicate, that the period is not far distant when they shall be thus gathered, and when these prophecies, like all the rest recorded in the Bible, shall in every respect receive their full and final accomplishment. On the ground, therefore, of these facts, I hesitate not to say, that the evidence for the divine authority of the Bible arising from prophecy in general, but especially from the prophecies which so exactly describe the state of the Jews in their present dispersion, and which are daily, as appears from the existing state of things, so remarkably exemplified under our immediate observation, is so incon-

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trovertibly and satisfactorily attested, that nothing but the most obstinate and determined infidelity can possibly prevent any man from acknowledging its authority, and submitting to the truth and justice of its claims.

Section 2.

On the alleged Prophecy of the Hindoo Shasters.

The evidence for the divine authority of the Bible which is deduced from prophecy, and exhibited in the foregoing section, must be acknowledged by every reader not blinded by prejudice, to be full and satisfactory. It cannot, however, reasonably be supposed, that the mind of every man into whose hands this book may fall, will be free from this barrier to candid investigation: we may therefore reasonably expect, that in many instances the truth of this inference will not be immediately conceded. The Hindoos, it is well known, will bring forward their objections, by opposing to the statements before given a prophecy which they say is contained in their Shasters, viz. that the Hindoo system of religion will not remain to the end of time. It is, we are informed, predicted in the Shasters, that in the latter ages of the world, the inhabitants of Bengal will depart from the faith and worship of their ancestors, and become apostates from the religion to which they have previously adhered. The Hindoos view this prophecy, (as they term it,) in connection with the various circumstances which are now taking place in the land, the attempts which are universally making to spread another religion, and the number of their countrymen who have already embraced that religion; and from this they argue, that this record of their Shaster, being as we trust it is on the eve of receiving its accomplishment, is therefore a true prediction.

In answer to this trivial objection, I reply, that if a man builds a large house, and lays a rotten unstable foundation, he will not, if he predicts that in the course of a few years, the house, though firm as to its exterior appearance,

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will fall to the ground, acquire thereby the character of a prophet: he has only foretold what might reasonably be expected, and what, according to the common course of events, must certainly come to pass. The Hindoo religion, therefore, resembling as it does this house, might naturally be expected to meet with a similar fate. Instead of being erected on the foundation of truth, it is built on the foundation of ignorance and deceit—it is not the religion which God has revealed, but a religion that was established by impostors for political purposes. The Hindoo legislators who were the framers and establishers of this religion, had no other design in its propagation than the accomplishment of their own selfish designs; viz. the perpetuating their own authority, by putting out the eyes of the people, and bringing them into a state of implicit and degrading subjection. Knowing, therefore, as these legislators did, the deception of which they were guilty, and the utter falsehood of that religious system which they were propagating in the world, the declaration which they made respecting it is by no means to be wondered at; because the investigation of it which they might reasonably suppose would take place at some future period, would be sure to detect its fallacy, and terminate in its destruction. But suppose, on the other hand, a man builds a house, and instead of predicting its ultimate fall, he asserts that it will stand and endure for ever—if the declaration which he thus makes respecting it be fulfilled, we must then acknowledge that he was, when he uttered that declaration, under the influence of a true prophetic spirit, because it is contrary to experience and the common course of events, that such a circumstance should occur. This simile is brought forward to illustrate the truth of the Christian religion: resembling as it does this latter house, we must, if candidly enquiring after truth, necessarily acknowledge that it has for its foundation a divine authority, which, it is evident from observation, is engaged for its defence and support. When this religion was first established in the world, the overwhelming opposition which

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it had to encounter, indicated to all human appearance its speedy termination, and threatened its entire destruction: but the predictions of its Author respecting it assumed a different aspect: instead of prognosticating its ruin, as might have been expected from these disastrous appearances, he foretold its universal triumph and perpetual stability. The acknowledgment, therefore, of the truth and divine authority of the religion which he came to establish, is the only rational principle on which we can account for succeeding circumstances so remarkably confirming, as they have done, his interesting prophetic declaration.

Besides the alleged prophecy to which I have now referred, the Hindoos, I believe, bring forward no other evidence of this nature, for the support of the truth of their religion. They have, in fact, no body of similar evidence, which they can advance to prove the divine authority of Hindooism, like that which arises from the multitude, variety, and harmony of the prophecies contained in the Christian Scriptures, and which have been fulfilled, and are daily in so many instances continuing to be fulfilled in our experience. As for the pretended prophetic declaration to which I have just referred—this, instead of in any way supporting the truth of the Hindoo religion, ought rather to be looked upon as a confirmation of its falsehood, and a proof of the duplicity of its authors. But when, on the other hand, we contemplate the contrary description which is given of Christianity,—when we hear its Author assert, that it shall spread and stand for ever,—when we recollect, that this assertion was made when the existing appearance of things indicated its fate to be quite the reverse,—when we bring the testimony of facts to bear upon this assertion, and find by the various events which have occurred, and which are daily occurring in the world, that it has been and is still continuing to be more and more circumstantially fulfilled,—we are, as a natural and necessary consequence, constrained to acknowledge, that the fulfilment

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of this prediction may justly be considered as an indubitable evidence of the divine authority of his mission, and a satisfactory proof of the truth of his own declaration, which is recorded by the Evangelist John, chap. xii. ver. 49. "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak: whatsoever I speak, therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

The Argument which is derived from the Resurrection stated.

The reanimation and restoration to life of a person that has been dead, and laid in the grave, is a most wonderful occurrence—an occurrence which it is beyond the power of ordinary causes to effect, and, such an event as, (with the exception of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose resurrection from the dead is the subject to be considered in the present chapter, with one or two others who were raised by his power,) was never before heard of, and probably never will be heard of again whilst the world stands.

When the cavilling Jews came to Christ, and requested him to give them a sign in confirmation of his divine mission, he refused to comply with their request, so far as to grant them the sign they required; but appealed to his resurrection, which was shortly about to take place, as a sufficient sign, and a convincing proof, that he was a teacher sent from God; stating at the same time, that if they would not acknowledge this as a sign, and receive it as a confirmation of the truth and justice of his claims, no other testimony would be given them. Matt. xii. 38.

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Christ having, by this address to the Jews, made his resurrection the test by which the truth or falsehood of his claims to a divine mission may be ascertained, we are therefore warranted, by the authority which we derive from this appeal, to examine it accordingly. To this test, therefore, as thet ouchstone of its truth, let us bring it; and after an impartial investigation, let it stand or fall, in proportion to the sufficiency or deficiency of the evidence which is brought forward in proof of its actual occurrence.

If the propriety of this principle be acknowledged, and we proceed upon it as the ground of our future examination, the state of the argument before us will be found to be simply as follows:—Christ, before his crucifixion, asserted, and rested the truth of his message as a divine teacher upon that assertion, that he would rise again from the dead. Our business, therefore, is to examine, as we purpose to do in the following section, the evidences by which his asserted resurrection is attested; because if we can obtain satisfaction on this point, the conclusion is inevitable:—i. e. if it can be undeniably substantiated, that he actually did rise again according to his word, then the divine authority of his mission, and the truth of the Scriptures, as involved in, and connected with that mission, must as necessary consequences be acknowledged to be satisfactorily established thereby.

Section 1.

View of the Evidences of the Resurrection.

Before we attempt to prove the fact of the Saviour's having actually risen again from the dead, it is necessary, in the first place, satisfactorily to establish the fact of his death. The four Evangelists, who have all written at length on this subject, have each of them given us a circumstantial account of all the particulars connected with his crucifixion: and the fact of his being actually dead before he was taken down from the cross, is abundantly

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confirmed by the testimony of Mark, chap. xv. 42. and following verses, where Pilate's precaution in sending for the Roman centurion, and questioning him in order to be satisfied on this subject, before he delivered the body into the hands of Joseph for burial, is particularly recorded.

The reality of his death being, as it is in these verses, sufficiently authenticated, the place of his burial next demands our attention. On this subject, the same inspired penman has informed us, (and his testimony is corroborated by all the other Evangelists, who have separately noticed the events,) that he was buried in a sepulchre hewn out of a rock: and from the account which he has given us, that a great stone was afterwards rolled to the door of the sepulchre, we infer that this sepulchre was hewn out of a solid rock, which entirely precluded any admission into its interior, except through the door by which the body had been conveyed. The consideration, therefore, of the precaution which was used to ascertain the reality of the Redeemer's death,—the security of the place in which he was buried,—and the impossibility of releasing the body in any other way than through the door by which it was originally deposited in this gloomy prison of the grave,—will, if we keep these different bearings of the subject in view, enable us correctly to appreciate the weight of that direct evidence which now comes under our notice, in confirmation of the truth of his resurrection.

In the closing part of the history of the Saviour's life, we are informed, that his enemies the Jews were acquainted with his previous prediction relative to this important event. In order, therefore, to prevent the body being stolen, and a false report in consequence of it propagated amongst his followers, that he had, according to his declaration, risen from the dead, they took the precaution to obtain from Pilate a guard of 100 Roman soldiers, which for the better security of the sepulchre, they placed at its entrance, to keep watch, and see that no imposition was

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practised. In addition to this, the governor also gratified them by sealing with the great seal of the empire, the stone by which its mouth was secured, and which it was death by Roman law for any man to break without his permission. These transactions the reader, if he wishes, may be fully acquainted with, by perusing the account which we have of them in the Gospel by Matt. chap. xxvii. 62 and following verses. We need not, however, confine our attention to the testimony of a single individual : the four Evangelists have all written on this subject ; and if we compare their respective histories, and are open to conviction, we must acknowledge, that the precautions which they state to have been used, prevented all possibility of deception in this important affair. Consequently the account which they have separately given us of the resurrection, in the concluding chapters of the Gospels of which they are severally the authors, undoubtedly may, as it accords with all that collateral writers have advanced upon the subject, be relied upon as correct, being, as it is, the testimony of faithful, competent witnesses to a fact which happened under their own immediate observation.

The Evangelist Matthew, in his history, has noticed several circumstances, connected with the resurrection, which the others, who subsequently wrote, have omitted. Whilst, therefore, the perusal of all which these inspired authors have recorded on the subject is recommended to the reader, his attention is particularly requested to the xxviii. chap. of this Evangelist's Gospel, where he will find it related, that notwithstanding all the precautions of the Jews, on the third day, the precise period which the Redeemer had previously specified, he arose, in exact conformity to his prediction, a triumphant and everlasting conqueror over death and the grave.

In the passage to which the reader's attention is here directed, we have, in addition to the testimony of the disciples of Christ, also the testimony of the Roman guard, as to the certainty of the fact recorded: and the reader can scarcely fail to be struck, when he compares the histories

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of these inspired writers with the number of the witnesses by whom this important event is attested. It appears from their writings, and their veracity may undoubtedly be relied on, that the Redeemer, after his resurrection, appeared not less than nine times to his immediate followers. On one of these occasions, as we learn from the 1st Epistle to the Cor. xv. 76, he appeared to more than 500 brethren at once; and the majority of them were living, to bear witness to the truth of the fact, when this letter of the apostle was addressed to the Corinthian church.

If human testimony, therefore, can be at all relied upon, the united and well supported testimony of the numerous witnesses to the actual occurrence of the important event we are investigating, is certainly worthy of credit. To suppose for a moment that they were deceived, is to suppose that which, in their circumstances, it was utterly impossible could take place. The fact which they have attested was open to investigation: they had the evidences of their senses; and acquainted as they were with the person of the Redeemer, could not be mistaken in their endeavours to identify him. They repeatedly saw him—recognized him in his deportment—knew him by the print of the nails in his hands and his feet, and the mark of the spear in his side. They conversed with him—they ate and drank with him. They received and acted in conformity to his commands. They saw him visibly ascend to heaven, and afterwards themselves wrought miracles by a power which he communicated to them. This appears to be as far as evidence of any kind can extend, or can possibly be required; and therefore there is no alternative, if we wish to act like reasonable men, but to give our assent to the truth of their testimony.

The reality of the Redeemer's resurrection has been objected to, in consequence of his not having afterwards appeared amongst his enemies, as he was accustomed to do previous to his death: but this objection, however plausible it may appear, loses all its force, when we consider the reasons for the different line of conduct which he after-

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wards pursued during the short period of his residence on earth. The foundation of his kingdom was now laid, and the means for its permanent establishment secured. He had, by pouring out his soul unto death, finished the work which his Father gave him to do; and the general testimony which, as the living and true Witness, he was designated to bear to the world, he had faithfully discharged, and fully accomplished. The necessity of his continued public appearance consequently ceasing to exist, he then, as might reasonably be expected, withdrew from the world, and confined the favour of his future visits to that little band of his faithful followers which he had chosen out of it, and which, as his witnesses, he appointed to publish the glad tidings of his salvation throughout the earth.

In addition to these reasons, we may also observe, that the evidence which Christ had previously given, that his message was divine, was amply sufficient to convince all his opposers, had they not been hardened in their obstinacy and infidelity. It was not requisite, nor even proper, that God should give them such an overwhelming degree of evidence as would irresistibly compel them to believe, which would in some measure have been the case, had he appeared again in a public manner after the occurrence of this important event. Faith, we are told in the Scriptures, is necessary as a test of obedience; but it cannot be a test of obedience, if it be compulsory. We are, therefore, required to believe, on the ground of the evidence which God has already given: and as this evidence is abundantly sufficient to convince every reasonable enquirer, the guilt of all who reject Christianity for want of more is inexcusable: and we are assured by Him who "is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent," that the wrath of God must for ever abide on all such persons; and they will, as the consequence of it, have their portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone, where the smoke of their torment will ascend for ever and ever. (John iii. 36. Rev. xiv. 10, 11. xx. 10. xxi. 8.)

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Section 2.

Further Remarks on the Resurrection, with the Evidence which is derived from it, in support of the Divine Authority of the Sacred Scriptures.

In the foregoing section, the fact of the Redeemer's resurrection must be acknowledged, by every candid enquirer, to be established by a body of evidence so solid and satisfactory, that no reasonable doubt can possibly be entertained of its actual occurrence. But as the Jews, in order to invalidate the force of this evidence, have propagated a report, that his disciples came by night, and stole him away; to the refutation of this report, which has its foundation in malice and falsehood, our attention must now be directed. In the gospel by Matthew, chap. xxviii. ver. 11 to 15, we have an account of the circumstances in which this report originated. The reader having perused this passage, which, on account of its length, I must necessarily omit to insert, I request his attention to the following observations. The sepulchre, as we have already observed, in which the Redeemer's body was deposited, was hewn out of a solid rock: into this sepulchre, therefore, there could be no back way of admission: its locality was such, that it must of necessity have had but one entrance; and at this only entrance, by which admission into its interior could possibly be obtained, there was placed, we are informed, a guard of 100 armed Roman soldiers. Does it therefore, I ask, does it appear at all likely, that Christ's eleven unarmed disciples would madly rush upon destruction, which they must have done, by venturing upon so dangerous an experiment as an attempt to steal away his body under such circumstances? If they made this attempt, and succeeded, according to this assertion of the Jews, we must acknowledge that they were the most valiant and courageous of men; but an appeal to facts will, if we are free from prejudice, soon convince us that the contrary was the case. If we review their former conduct, we shall

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find, that when the officers of the Jewish Sanhedrim seized Christ, and danger presented itself to view, they displayed neither courage nor valour. Instead of magnanimously standing by their Master in this hour of danger, we are informed by the evangelist Mark, (xiv. 50,) that they all forsook him, and fled. If, therefore, when Christ was alive, they had not the courage to adhere to him in these circumstances of lesser danger, can it possibly be for a moment supposed, that they would, in circumstances of so much greater danger, have the courage to appear for him when dead; and by an attempt to rescue his body, expose, as they must have done, their own lives in so hazardous and useless a manner? A slight attention, therefore, to the absurdity and trivial nature of this report, will soon convince us, that a serious attempt to refute it is unnecessary; for contradicting, as it does, both reason and experience, it thereby carries its own refutation along with it, and evidently appears to be the fabrication of men who were at their wits' end to get rid of a fact, the glaring evidence of which they knew not how to withstand. If the Roman soldiers, according to this report, had really been guilty of so notorious an offence as sleeping whilst on military duty, why was the martial law of that warlike people, by which for this offence they were liable to the punishment of death, instead of being put in execution against them, suffered to sleep likewise? If the truth of this report be admitted, the disciples also must have incurred the penalty of death, in breaking the seal by which the Roman Governor had secured the entrance to the sepulchre. Why then, if their guilt could be established, was the civil law suffered to sleep, as well as the military? Why, if guilty of so heinous a crime, were they all, instead of suffering the sentence of the law, permitted to escape with impunity. Suppose that, according to this common report, the body had actually been stolen, the question naturally arises, where was it deposited? Why was it not sought for, and being found, which might easily have been accomplished, exposed to the view of the

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populace? The Jews, by doing this, would have effectually demonstrated the guilt of the disciples, proved their declaration of his resurrection to be a falsehood, and at once put an end to the further spread of the Christian religion. It is singular, that under such circumstances, they never attempted, by an appeal to facts, to confirm the truth of their assertion—that the stolen body was never sought for—that the delinquent soldiers, with the offending disciples, instead of being brought to justice for the offence of which they had severally been guilty, and punished with death as the law of the land required, were all allowed to escape, without any criminal process whatever being ever instituted against them. The fact is, the Jews could not substantiate their assertion: policy, therefore, dictated the propriety of omitting such an investigation, as it must necessarily have exposed their hypocrisy and falsehood, and placed, to the everlasting ruin of their cause, the truth of the Redeemer's resurrection in a more prominent and satisfactory point of view. There cannot indeed be a more convincing proof of the falsehood of this charge, which they brought against the Redeemer's disciples, of their having stolen away the body, than what is derived from Acts ii. 23, 24, and chap. iv. 10. There we find the apostle Peter, in the most public manner, boldly addressing, in the first place, the people, and afterwards their rulers; and testifying before them, that God had raised from the dead that Jesus whom they with wicked hands had crucified and slain. Why then, if this assertion was a falsehood, and the disciples had stolen away the body, did they suffer such a notoriety to pass uncontradicted? Their silence on this occasion evidences, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that they were convinced of the truth of his statement: it speaks more than a thousand arguments, and demonstratively proves, that they both felt and knew, that the wicked fabrication of which they had been guilty was so grossly apparent, that they could not, without the most determined audacity, possibly persevere in it.

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Waiving, therefore, as unnecessary, any further remarks on this objection, I pass on to notice another, with which the enemies of Christianity have endeavoured to undermine its sacred foundations, and barricade the cause of their own desperate infidelity. It has been observed, that admitting the disciples of Christ were free from the guilt and knavery with which the Jews charged them, in first stealing the body of their Master, and then reporting to the world that he had arisen from the dead, yet may it not be supposed, that they were a company of weak, credulous, and superstitious men, who were in some way or other imposed upon, and made to believe in the reality of his resurrection, although in fact no such event ever took place?

To this objection I reply, that however plausible it may appear, it is nevertheless dictated by sophistry, and too weak to stand before the examination of truth. If we bring it to the testimony of facts, and compare it with various traits of the character and conduct of the apostles, as they are ingenuously pourtrayed in the evangelical history, we shall soon be convinced, that instead of being weak and superstitious men, they were quite the reverse. There is not a single instance left on record which can lead us to believe, that they were inclined to credit every idle report brought before them. It is a well attested circumstance, that not one of them assented to the truth of the resurrection, on the ground of mere testimony. They required the evidence of sense; and making this, as they did, the test of its truth, they one and all persevered in an obstinate infidelity, refusing to give their assent to the fact of its actual occurrence, until this evidence was obtained.

We learn, from the history of this important event, as it is recorded in the Gospels, that Christ did not immediately after his resurrection appear to the collective body of his disciples, but to detached parties of two or three, or more of them, as they were found together. In one instance, he appeared to the eleven, when only one (viz. Thomas) was absent. On his rejoining their society, they

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immediately communicated the information to him, telling him, as they doubtless did with hearts elated with joy, that they had seen the Lord; and yet their united testimony was, we are informed, insufficient to convince him of the reality and truth of the fact. Instead of believing the intelligence, supported as it was by so many accredited witnesses, he replied, (John xx. 25,) "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." From this, as well as various other statements relating to the same subject, it appears that the apostles, instead of being weak and superstitious, and therefore liable to be imposed upon, were quite the reverse: their assent to the truth of the Saviour's resurrection was with difficulty obtained; they were cautious to an unnecessary degree, in making, as they each of them did, a personal interview with him the only terms on which they would believe it, and rejecting, in the exercise of their incredulity, that most satisfactory testimonial evidence by which it was so repeatedly confirmed.

In addition to what I have advanced in the way of reasoning on this important subject, I now request the reader's attention to what is recorded in the Scriptures on the gift of the Holy Spirit. To this we may appeal as a conclusive fact, which, substantiating as it does the undoubted reality of the resurrection, is of more worth than a thousand arguments, and to our utmost satisfaction completely terminates the controversy. This inestimable blessing was a boon which God from the beginning designed to bestow upon the Christian church. This gift, however, was not imparted on the first preaching of the Gospel, but was reserved for a season, in order to confirm the Redeemer's resurrection, and honour his ascension. We are therefore told, (John vii. 39,) that "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified." In John xvi. 7, Christ especially promises to send the Spirit as a Comforter to his disciples after his exaltation; and in Acts i. 8, we find a repetition of the same pro-

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mise, which he gave to them after the resurrection, with a command to continue in Jerusalem until it was fulfilled. In the 2d chapter of the same book, the important and interesting fact of the fulfilment of this promise by the descent of the Holy Spirit is recorded; with an ample statement, which is corroborated by various other passages of Scripture, of the wonderful effects which followed, in the power to work miracles, and the gift of tongues, which he communicated to the apostles; and the rapid and almost universal spread of the Gospel which immediately took place. It is also pleasing to all who feel interested in the cause of Christianity to recollect, that although the influences of this divine Agent have frequently been suspended in measure, yet they have never been entirely withdrawn from the church. In the present day, he is still carrying on his ordinary, but not less effective operations, by quickening the dead in trespasses and sins, by subduing the power of sin in the hearts of men, by bending their stubborn wills in holy submission to the Saviour, and by extending and establishing his kingdom more and more in the world.

An appeal to this fact, we therefore conceive, is sufficient to bring the matter in dispute at once to an issue; i. e. The Saviour's resurrection, which is the subject of our enquiry, is by this descent of the Holy Spirit, and by his continued operations in the church, established on the most solid basis. By this it is satisfactorily ascertained, and incontestibly proved, that he actually did rise from the dead, according to his own previous declaration:—consequently, by his thus rising, (which event he antecedently referred to, as the test or standard of subsequent appeal,) he has demonstratively proved the truth and divine authority of his mission, and also of the Christian Scriptures, which being the records of that mission, are of necessity equally substantiated by the same glorious and triumphant event.

Should the reader not be able to comprehend the force of this abstract reasoning, he will, if he attend to the fol-

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lowing illustration, by which the argument is brought to bear upon the subject of our investigation, be convinced that the inference which in this concluding paragraph I have drawn from the resurrection is both natural and correct. Suppose a man becomes surety for his neighbour, and engages, as his neighbour's security, to pay, in case of his inability, a certain sum of money. Should he on this account be afterwards arrested, and thrown into prison for payment of the stipulated sum, it of course follows, that he will not be liberated from his confinement until he has fulfilled his engagement, or in some way or other made satisfaction to the parties to whom, by his voluntary contract, he made himself responsible. So Christ, the great and exclusive Surety of mankind, was arrested by the justice of God, on account of the sins which he had engaged to expiate, and confined in the prison of the grave. His liberation, therefore, from that prison, proves that his expiatory sacrifice was accepted, and the debt which he had engaged to defray fully discharged; because nothing but this could possibly procure his release. Had he not been a divine teacher, or had his work not been fully perfect in every respect, he would have remained, as all men in the ordinary course of nature do, in the prison of the grave to the present day. The satisfactory manner, therefore, in which his resurrection is substantiated, and the sufficiency of proof which arises from it in confirmation of the truth and divine authority of the Bible, and of the divine message which, being as he was a teacher sent from God, he bore to mankind, were there no other proof, are of themselves sufficient to satisfy every reasonable and candid enquirer, that the Bible is, and that it alone is the true revelation which, as a light shining in a dark place, God has graciously given to direct a guilty and benighted world into the way of life and salvation.

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CHAPTER IV.

On the Sufferings and Conduct of the Apostles.

Principles of the Argument, derived from the Labours and Sufferings of the Apostles in the Cause of Christianity.

Selfishness, it is evident to every observer of mankind, is a prevailing principle, and distinguishing trait of the human character. A desire to promote the public welfare enters but little into the actions of the generality of men. Hence it is, that whilst multitudes, under the influence of the above-stated principles, are ever found ready to engage in hazardous and painful undertakings, there are but few in the world who have sufficient philanthropy to sacrifice, by a life of painful self-denial, their private interest and personal comfort at the altar of public benevolence.

Attested and confirmed as the truth of this observation is by our every-day experience, we are, by our knowledge of this commonly prevailing rule of action, naturally led, if we see a man undertake a difficult and dangerous enterprise, to conclude that personal aggrandisement, in some way or other, must necessarily be the object of his ambitious pursuit.

Suppose, however, instead of taking it for granted that he is actuated by mercenary motives of this kind, we enter into a close examination of his conduct, and in the course of this examination find that we have been mistaken in the previous apprehension which we had formed as to the object by which he was influenced—suppose, to our astonishment, we discover, that the undertaking in which he has engaged demands far more costly sacrifices than we had previously imagined, subjects him to all that is revolting to human nature, and perpetually exposes him to death, in the most terrible and terrific forms

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—suppose also, that by the investigation it is clearly demonstrated, that in the course of painful exertion which he uniformly pursues, he is not, according to our preconception, influenced by the love of wealth, neither by a spirit of pride or ambition, nor any other desire to promote his own private interest—suppose it is also equally ascertained and clearly proved, that he is not a fanatic, neither labouring under any mental delusion, but, in the use of the best adapted means, pursues his object in a steady persevering manner—we must, on this discovery, (as a necessary consequence,) naturally conclude, that he is under the influence of some extraordinary principles and motives of action, not common to mankind in general.

Allow me to prosecute this illustration, and still further to suppose, that in our endeavours to ascertain the real and mysterious motives by which the individual I have here described is actuated, in his voluntary labours and painful exertions, we learn, either directly from himself, or indirectly from others who have received creditable information on the subject, that the secret spring of his actions is an extraordinary communication which he professes to have received from the Deity. To this communication is annexed a command, by which he is required to make the contents of it known to the world; and it is therefore in conformity to this command, and with a view to promote the happiness of mankind, which is intimately connected with their knowledge of this revelation, that he thus labours and exposes himself to suffering and pain. We must, on making such a discovery as this, certainly acknowledge that, so far as he is individually concerned, he undoubtedly has an implicit faith in the truth of the communication which he professes to have received; i. e. he gives, by his conduct in subjecting himself to a life of patient self-denial, a demonstrative proof that he is an honest and sincere man, and pursues, on the ground of principle and conviction, the plain path of duty, according to the directions contained in the re-

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velation which he asserts he has been privileged to receive.

Admitting that a case exactly corresponding with what I have here described came before us, what, I ask, would be the inference which we should draw from this testimony of the sincerity of this extraordinary character? If we did not look upon it as amounting to satisfactory proof, we must, according to all the common principles of action, at least acknowledge that it ought to be considered as a strong presumptive evidence that he actually has, according to his profession, received a communication from above.

Should the enquiring reader now be anxious to know whether such a circumstance as this ever occurred in the world, I answer in the affirmative, and direct him, for a proof of my assertion, to the labours and sufferings of the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, as they are described in the following sections, for an example of the actual existence of what I have now been supposing. These servants of the Most High, with a holy freedom from every sinister motive, laboured, and suffered, and died to propagate the gospel: we are therefore warranted to assert, that the gospel is, by these characteristic marks of their sincerity, sufficiently authenticated to justify our reception of it, as the exclusive revelation which God has given to guide men, as the subjects of his moral government, into the way of happiness and eternal life.

Section 1.

Examination of the Motives by which the Apostles were actuated in their Endeavours to promote the Spread of the Gospel.

It must be evident to all who are acquainted with the contents of the New Testament, that the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ could not be influenced by selfishness, in their endeavours to accelerate in the world the interests of the religion with which he had intrusted them. As

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rational men, which they undoubtedly were, mercenary motives or hopes of temporal gain could not possibly enter into their scheme, because the Redeemer himself had from the beginning taught them to expect the very reverse. In becoming his disciples, they were required to take up their cross; and were told, if needs be, that they must forsake father, and mother, and wife, and brethren, and sisters, rather than forego their attachment to his cause. He commanded them not to lay up for themselves treasure upon earth, but to prepare for persecutions, and to expect that their names would be cast out by men as evil, and ever to be ready to lay down their lives for his sake. In propagating the religion which they received from him, they uniformly acted upon the self-denying principles in which they had been instructed. Instead of holding forth any alluring prospects of a temporal nature, to those whom they endeavoured to proselyte, they maintained the same doctrine as their Master, and unreservedly told those who became converts to the faith of the Gospel, that "in the world they must expect tribulation."

If the reader peruse the Acts of the Apostles, and the various epistles of the New Testament, which contain the earliest records of the history of the church, he will there find an abundance of proof, in the various accounts which are given of the opposition which they universally met with, in their endeavours to preach the faith of Christ, that they had not been unnecessarily forewarned, neither did they unnecessarily forewarn others, to prepare for trials and persecutions in their Christian career. The troubles which they afterwards underwent in the cause of their Master, proved the truth of the doctrines which he had previously taught them; and whether we refer to the one or the other, we shall find, that as men with their eyes open, they could, in no possible way whatever, be influenced by even the shadow of a hope, that any secular advantage or temporal gain would ac-

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crue to them from the hazardous undertaking in which they embarked.

It is, if possible, still more absurd to suppose, that pride or ambition entered into their scheme, or formed a part of their projects. The honour that cometh from men was amongst the things which by their Lord they were forbidden to seek; and instead of their being enrolled amongst the great and noble of the earth, we find, from their history, that they met with the most sovereign contempt—that they were looked upon by the men of the world with scorn and indignation, and were every where treated as the refuse of the earth, and the offscouring of all things.

And whilst it is certain that the apostles were not, in their career of Christian philanthropy, influenced by ambition or covetousness, it is also equally clear, that they were not weak, fanatical, or superstitious men; but men, as is evident from their writings, who were in their sound senses, and who possessed a correct judgment, and a deep acquaintance with the human heart. We are, therefore, on taking this view of their conduct, naturally led to enquire, By what motives could these zealous labourers in this despised cause possibly be influenced? What was the secret impetus which induced them thus voluntarily to submit to defamation, to suffer the loss of all things, and patiently to undergo a series of sufferings unparallelled in the annals of history? If we call upon these men to speak for themselves, we shall find that they tell us a plain, simple, and unvarnished story; which is attested by so many circumstantial and characteristic marks of truth, that we are almost irresistibly constrained to believe it. Instead of being influenced by sinister motives, we learn from the simple testimony which they have given us, that the happiness of mankind (for the promotion of which they were deeply concerned,) was intimately connected with their reception of the doctrines which they were labouring to circulate—that these doc-

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trines were communicated to them by a special revelation from God—and that it was by his command and authority they thus laboured and suffered to propagate them through the world.

Having, therefore, listened to their statement, enquired into their motives, and examined their conduct, all that remains for us to do is, as reasonable men, and candid enquirers after truth, to judge, as far as we can, what are the probabilities of the case. And if in thus judging, we bring the foregoing illustration to bear upon the subject, the only rational conclusion at which we can possibly arrive is, that what they have asserted is undoubtedly true: for whilst, on the one hand, there is no justifiable ground on which we can reject their testimony, there is, on the other hand, the most satisfactory evidence that can reasonably be required in confirmation and support of its truth. They have about them all the air, and mien, and characteristic traits of honest and sincere men: they tell us, that they had the authority of the Deity for acting as they did; and we are compelled to admit the veracity of their assertion, as the only rational explication that possibly can be given of their conduct. It is the height of adsurdity to suppose, that they would labour and suffer, and submit to the loss of all things, without some important reason; much less that they should, without any imaginable motive, spend their lives in endeavouring to propagate what they knew to be falsehood, deception, and lies.

Perhaps some of my readers may be satisfied as to the truth of what I have thus far advanced, and yet be ready to reply,—That admitting the apostles were honest, upright, and sincere men, and influenced by the purest of motives in the labours which they undertook, yet it is still possible that they might be mistaken, both in their views of the truth, and their ideas of the importance, of Christianity; i. e. Christianity, notwithstanding their zealous labours to propagate it, and their undoubted belief of its divine authority, might nevertheless be a

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cunningly devised fable, the falsehood of which they could not detect, in consequence of the power which superstition and fanaticism had upon their minds.

This, I reply, is utterly impossible. I have before observed, that they were neither fanatics nor enthusiasts: the very supposition strikes at the root of all testimonial evidence, and involves an absurdity which needs no contradiction. I therefore do not hesitate unequivocally to assert, and will maintain the assertion, that the uprightness and integrity of their conduct, is a satisfactory confirmation of the truth of the Christian Scriptures. If it can be proved that they were honest and sincere men, then Christianity, (involved as it is in the integrity of their conduct,) is likewise equally proved to be, beyond all doubt, the true, and the *only* true religion. The apostles and first preachers of Christianity could not possibly be labouring under a delusion---the circumstances in which they were placed utterly prevented it. It was no hearsay story which they propagated, but that which had come under their own immediate observation. They were eye-witnesses of the facts which they record: it was not that which they had heard, but that which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and which their hands had handled of the good word of life. (1 John, i. 1.) Let the objector, therefore, turn which ever way he will, it will be impossible for him to find any ground on which to suspect the veracity of the apostles, or doubt the truth of their testimony. If this conclusion is admitted as just and correct, there is then no flaw whatever: the mystery which otherwise hangs over their conduct is immediately removed; and the motives which induced them to labour, and by which they were supported through such a series of trials, are on this principle evident and clear; and the difficulties which they patiently underwent rationally accounted for. But, on the other hand, if the truth of this position be denied, inexplicable difficulties and clashing principles meet us at every turn. We are, therefore, on the ground of

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all experience, and of all moral, rational, and testimonial evidence, compelled, as a necessary and unavoidable conclusion, to admit the truth of what the sacred writers have asserted; and to receive the Bible, on the testimony which they have given us, as a book which is given "by inspiration of God, and which is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, and which is able to make men wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." (2 Tim. iii. 15, 16.)

Section 2.

On the Sufferings and Persecutions which the Apostles underwent in the Cause of Christianity.

In the foregoing section, an allusion has been made to the situation in which the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ were placed at the introduction of the gospel dispensation, and to the impossibility of their being deceived as to the truth of his mission, and the indubitable manner in which the divine authority of the doctrine which he taught was corroborated. This point being, as it is, incontrovertibly established, the argument for the truth of Christianity is thereby made to rest upon the satisfactory nature of the proofs which are adduced of their own honesty as witnesses and historians; and of the sincerity of the motives by which they were actuated in their endeavours to propagate it. I have already enlarged upon their disinterestedness, and their freedom from sinister motives, but have only made a few distant allusions to the actual sufferings which they underwent in their career of Christian exertion. I shall now therefore proceed, from this view of the subject, to direct the reader's attention to the positive proofs of the integrity of their characters—the sincerity of their motives—their veracity as witnesses—and their faithfulness as historians, which arise from the detailed account we have given us, both in Scripture and history, of the persecutions, privations, and trials which they perpetually underwent in the noble cause of disin-

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terested benevolence and laborious philanthropy in which they embarked.

We learn from the records of the Acts of the Apostles, that no sooner had the servants of Christ, in obedience to their Master's commands, entered upon the great work to which he had designated them, than a heavy storm of painful and discouraging persecution overtook them. We shall find, if we read the former part of Acts iv., that almost on their first attempt to preach the gospel, they were seized by officers appointed for the purpose, and carried before the Jewish Sanhedrim. It is also stated, chap. v. 10, that but a short period after this event had elapsed, ere they were again called to appear before the same high tribunal: and on this second appearance, they were ordered to be beaten, and received a command from the court, that they should no more speak to the people in the name of Jesus. A third summons shortly after overtook them, and they were once more compelled to present themselves at the bar of this iniquitous tribunal. The result of this their third appearance is recorded in Acts chap. vi. ver. 7, where we are informed, that one of their number was on this occasion put to death in the most unjust and cruel manner. In the 3d verse of the following chapter, we are told that Saul, who was a notorious persecutor, (though he afterwards became a preacher of the faith he was then labouring to destroy,) made havock of the church, entering into every house, and hailing men and women, committed them to prison. The 12th chapter of the same book states the death of James, who was killed by the sword, and the imprisonment of Peter, who would have met with the same fate, had he not been miraculously delivered. In the following chapters of the same inspired records, we have various detailed accounts of the sufferings, persecutions, and dangers, to which the apostle Paul was perpetually exposed; and the truth of those statements is abundantly confirmed by his own testimony, which we have in the numerous Epistles which he addressed to the Asia-

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tic and other churches*. It is, however, but a short account with which the sacred oracles furnish us, of the sufferings of the apostles and others of the first converts to Christianity. The principal information which we have on this subject, is derived from the works of various contemporary historians, who have written the history of these eventful ages. Josephus, Celsus, Tacitus, and Pliny, with several other of the writers who lived about this period, were decidedly hostile to Christianity. They were not (as is frequently objected to Christian authors) of the prejudiced party. On the contrary, they wrote with a view to injure and impede the cause of the gospel, and not with a design to increase the weight of that impregnable body of satisfactory and convincing evidence by which it is supported. The testimony, therefore, of these men may be confidently relied on; as it cannot be supposed that they would write more favourably of a religion which they thoroughly despised, than what they were compelled to do, out of respect to their own characters as faithful and correct historians.

From these various sources of information, we learn that the majority of the first preachers of Christianity were put to death by its hostile and malicious enemies, in a most unnatural and cruel manner. Mark, it is related, was dragged by a cord fastened to his feet through the streets of Alexandria, until life became extinct, and his body mangled in the most inhuman way. Luke was hanged in Greece. James was slain by the sword at Jerusalem. Peter was crucified, and Paul was beheaded, at Rome: and Thomas, who came to preach the gospel to the inhabitants of this country, was persecuted and slain by the Brahmuns†. Neither were the sufferings and trials of which I am here speaking confined to the apostles and other active propagators of Christianity. Every man who

* See 1 Cor. i. 4—9; and 2 Cor. xi. 24; also chap. vi. 4th and following verses, which passages are quoted at length in the first part of this work.

† See a little work on the evidences, entitled "A Father's Gift to his Children," page 78.

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renounced the religion of his ancestors, and became a convert to its sacred truths, was liable to be thus treated in those days of injustice and cruelty. It was not in one place, neither for a short space of time, but in every country where the gospel made its way, and through a long series of years, that Christians underwent, in a thousand different forms, these inhuman and unheard of trials. In some places they were whipped until all the flesh was torn from their bodies. In others they were dressed in the skins of beasts, and mercilessly exposed in the theatres of popular amusement, to be devoured by dogs, tigers, and other kinds of ferocious beasts. They were in some instances bound upon iron spikes, and compelled to remain in that painful position until the lamp of life was extinguished. Some were roasted alive before slow fires; whilst others were dipped in pitch and oil, and fire being put to them, were used as torches to illuminate public roads, gardens, and other places of general resort. In fact, so great were the sufferings and trials to which they were perpetually exposed, that the apostle has justly declared, in referring to them, (1 Cor. xv. 19,) that if in this life only they had hope in Christ, they were of all men the most miserable.

On this view of the sufferings of the apostles and first converts to the Christian cause, I ask the candid reader to solve the difficulty, by explaining, if he can, on what principle, and by what motives these noble sufferers could possibly be induced to deceive others, or suffer themselves tamely to be deceived, by receiving a religion which exposed them to such accumulated trials, without enquiring into (or in fact being any thing less than positively convinced of) its truth and divine authority. Too many painful instances frequently occur, in which it evidently appears that men are adepts in hypocrisy, deception, and lies: no such wickedness, however, can rationally be attributed to the men whose sufferings I have here described. Fire and sword, rack and tortures, imprisonment, banishment, and death are not things to be trifled

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with. We need, therefore, fear no contradiction when we say, that it was nothing but the deep conviction which they had of the truth and importance of the religion they had embraced, which enabled them, in the midst of these scenes of perpetual and accumulated suffering, firmly to adhere to it.

It was the hope of immortality which it exhibited, which was the efficient motive that operated so powerfully, and by which they were influenced, in the spirit of holy resignation, to submit to the loss of all things that were dear to them on earth; to renounce the religion in which they had been educated; to bear patiently the shame and defamation which were universally heaped upon them; and voluntarily to undergo the unparalleled sufferings and tortures which I have described, in order to defend and propagate it in the world. They had tasted of the good word of life, (Heb. vi. 5;) and being renewed in the spirit of their mind, (Eph. iv. 23,) were convinced that the gospel was the power of God unto salvation, (Rom. i. 16.) They saw that the world was lying in wickedness, (1 John v. 19,) and knew that the eternal ruin of its votaries, if they continued in their unbelief, was inevitable. Obedience, therefore, to the command of God, and compassion to the souls of men, were the exalted principles which induced them to become fools for Christ's sake, (1 Cor. iv. 10,) which supported them in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labours, in watchings, in fastings, (2 Cor. vi. 4, 5,) and by which they were enabled to take joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring substance. (Heb. x. 34.)

But besides the purity of the motives, the extent of the labours, and the magnitude of the sufferings by which the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ are distinguished, there is another point of view in which we are called upon to survey them. These disinterested philanthropists not only underwent pains and privations, and encountered death in every form, in consequence of their conviction

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of the truth and importance of Christianity, and their open profession of its doctrines; but it was on the ground of the same conviction, that the high excellence of moral character to which they attained, and which I have particularly enlarged upon in the first part of this work*, was formed. Under the influence of this conviction they not only laboured and suffered, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection; but they likewise renounced their old customs, submitted to new rules of conduct, withdrew themselves from every sinful indulgence, were characterized by humility and meekness, and holding forth the word of life, (Phil. ii. 16,) as lights shining in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, (Phil. ii. 15,) they became living epistles, read and known of all men. (2 Cor. iii. 2.)

The divine authority of the Christian Scriptures, I therefore unhesitatingly assert to be fully substantiated, by these sufferings of the apostles in defence of the religion therein revealed, and the characteristic marks of sincerity which they uniformly displayed in all their endeavours to propagate it. And the reader who rejects this inference is called upon to give a more reasonable account of their conduct; and to show, if he can, on more rational principles, what were the real motives by which they were actuated in their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, (1 Thess. i. 3.) If, however, he would divest his mind of prejudice, and instead of contradicting all the principles of right reasoning, act in conformity to them, he must of necessity admit the propriety of this conclusion; and as an unavoidable consequence be compelled to acknowledge, that Christianity is true—that the apostles knew it to be so---and, therefore, feeling as they did its importance, both to themselves and to others, they relied on, and were upheld by the arm of Omnipotence in their endeavours to preach it: and although it happened, through the

* Chap. II. Section 2.

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wickedness and malice of their opposers, that they were in deaths oft, (2 Cor. xi. 23,) yet being supported and protected by Him who commanded them to go forth and preach the gospel to every creature, (Mark xvi. 15,) they still courageously went on, fighting the good fight of faith, (1 Tim. vi. 12,) and endured as seeing Him who is invisible, (Heb. xi. 27.)

Section 3.

On the Conduct and Motives of those who suffer according to the Rites of the Hindoo Religion.

It is more than probable, that the arguments advanced in the foregoing section may be objected to by some of the readers of this work, as being of little or no weight in support of the Christian cause, because other systems of religion which are undoubtedly false, if they have not precisely the same, have nevertheless a considerable degree of similar evidence for their support. Hindooism, it may be observed, can boast of its martyrs, in the multitudes of women who, according to its prescribed ceremonies, are perpetually sacrificing themselves on the funeral piles of their deceased husbands. In answer to this objection, I reply, that the painful and undeniable fact that Hindoo women frequently and voluntarily destroy themselves, in conformity to the rules laid down in the Shaster, neither advances the cause of that religion, nor yet detracts from the satisfactory nature of the evidence which arises from the sufferings of the Christian martyrs in the defence and support of the gospel. The voluntary sacrifice of life which these victims of delusion make, will bear no comparison with those noble and more generous sacrifices which the apostles and first converts to Christianity made, rather than deny the Lord Jesus Christ, or disobey the command which he gave them to preach the gospel to every creature.

The Hindoo women who immolate themselves, do not act from a conviction, arising either from personal obser-

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vations or accredited testimony, that the act which they are about to perform is agreeable with the will of God. The deed is extolled and applauded; and being deluded by various statements of merit, represented to arise from this wicked sacrifice of life, they are thereby induced to submit to it. The probable truth, however, is, that the generality of them do it, in order to avoid the misery and disgrace to which they are conscious they shall be exposed in future life, from the cruel treatment of their relatives and friends. With the Christian martyrs, however, the case was quite the reverse; they were not encouraged and excited to throw away their lives; but were repeatedly tempted and allured to renounce Christianity. By complying with those temptations, they might have escaped the painful deaths I have described, saved their property and their possessions, and continued in the quiet enjoyment of their freedom, reputation, and friends.

The immolation of the Hindoo women is in general a sudden and hasty transaction, which is performed by them under the influence of either grief, or passion, or despair, or some other present feeling by which they are overcome, and for the time being deprived of the faculty of reason. But the Christian martyrs were not under the influence of any peculiar feelings of this kind, at the time they suffered. Their martyrdom was seldom a sudden or hasty occurrence: in most instances, a sufficient period was given them duly to consider the sufferings which they were about to undergo; and they had only to renounce Christianity, and return to the religious system which they had forsaken, to avoid the cruel and ignominious tortures which such multitudes of them patiently and triumphantly endured.

The Hindoo women receive no education, but are kept in total ignorance of spiritual things. In thus immolating themselves, therefore, they are only like a blind man, who, being unable to discover the destruction that awaits him, merely because he is bidden steps down a precipice, and

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dashes himself to pieces. But this was not the case with the suffering Christians of whom I have previously spoken. Submission to martyrdom was no blind step, which they ignorantly or inadvertently took. Multitudes of them were men who possessed a sound mind, a correct judgment, and an extensive knowledge of the world. They saw, and knew, and understood what they were doing: they were capable of examining the evidences, and appreciating the claims of Christianity. And to this examination (to which all men are invited, to whom the gospel is proposed) they duly and diligently attended. By thus investigating the Scriptures for themselves, they were fully convinced of their divine authority; and it was on the ground of this conviction that they acted, when, in obedience to the Saviour's command, (Mark viii. 34,) they denied themselves, and took up their cross, and followed him. To forsake father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, and their own lives likewise, (Luke xiv. 26,) they undoubtedly felt to be a trial of no ordinary nature; but they knew, whilst making these sacrifices, and submitting to these trials, that their afflictions, which comparatively were light, and but for a moment, would work out for them a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory. (2 Cor. vi. 17.)

The Hindoo women, if they can with any degree of propriety be called martyrs, are only martyrs of sentiment or opinion: they are taught from their infancy to believe, that to sacrifice their lives according to this cruel rite of the shaster is a meritorious act, which will be pleasing to God, and by which their happiness in a future state will inevitably be secured. But they are utterly incapable of judging for themselves, as to the truth or falsehood of this statement; in consequence of which they are very liable, as all men are when guided by others, or only acting under the influence of mere sentiment or opinion, to be deceived. The Christian martyrs, however, instead of being martyrs of sentiment, were martyrs of facts: they died not to attest what they had been taught, or merely supposed

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to be true; but they died to attest the truth of that which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and which their hands had handled of the word of life. (1 John i. 1.) Whilst, therefore, deception and falsehood are in the former case easy to be practised, they are totally excluded from the latter. Men may easily be mistaken as to what they have been taught, or what they have heard; but they cannot be mistaken as to what they have repeatedly seen and done; and which, by coming under their immediate observation, has been the subject of their own personal experience. According to this principle, therefore, no evidence for the support of the Hindoo religion is derived from the conduct of the sufferers who throw away their lives as an act of obedience to the precepts which it inculcates:—but the conduct of those who have bled and died in defence of the gospel, arising as it did from principles and motives of a nature totally different from that which actuates the victims of Hindoo immolation, may ever be appealed to as a strong auxiliary evidence in support of its truth. The former religion, therefore, instead of gaining by an examination on this subject, remains just where it was; whilst the evidences of the truth of the latter rise in proportion to the diligence with which they are investigated. By examination, the truth of its claims will more conspicuously appear; and triumphing, as it ever does, over every objection, it will leave the enquiring mind without the least shadow of a doubt as to its divine original.

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CHAPTER V.

On the Spread of the Gospel.

Of the Evidence which is derived from the rapid Spread of the Gospel on its first Publication.

At the period of the Redeemer's incarnation, every nation upon the face of the earth, the Jews excepted, was immersed in the grossest darkness, superstition, and idolatry. By the promulgation, however, of the religion which he came to establish, the majority of the systems of prevailing idolatry soon received a shock which they could not withstand, and which ultimately occasioned their downfall. The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the short space of 50 years from the commencement of its publication, obtained a footing in almost every country in the eastern and western world. The ancient superstition was by its rapid spread speedily undermined. Idolatrous temples were deserted, and Christian churches supplied their places. In the reign of Constantine, which was about 450 years after the Saviour's birth, Christianity became the established religion of the Roman empire; and in the course of a few years after this period, idolatry was banished from all the civilized countries of Europe.

I do not here mean to assert, that this circumstance alone is a satisfactory evidence of the truth of the gospel, any more than the rise, growth, and fruitfulness of a tree, planted in a rich and luxuriant soil, is a thing to be wondered at. But if I see a dry sapless stock assume the appearance of verdure, blossom, and bud, and bring forth fruit, my astonishment is excited, because such a thing is contrary to the established order of nature, and I am convinced that a divine power has interposed, and exerted itself to produce such a wonderful effect. Though the universal and rapid spread of the Christian religion, if

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merely considered in itself, is by no means sufficient to prove that its origin is divine, it must yet be recollected, that on its first publication in the world, it may, on account of the opposition which it had to encounter, and the difficulty with which it had to contend, justly be compared, as to any reasonable prospect of its succeeding, to the sapless stock of which I have spoken, and from which no fruit, in the ordinary course of events, could reasonably be expected. Its spread and triumph, therefore, under such circumstances, evidently proves that it was accomplished by the power of God. He it was who interposed on its behalf; and in blessing it, and accelerating in so extraordinary a manner its interests in the world, he has, as I shall now endeavour to show, (by giving a more detailed account of the circumstances under which it thus spread,) abundantly testified its divine original.

Section I.

Of the extraordinary Spread of the Gospel, at the Commencement of the Christian Era.

The Lord Jesus Christ, who was the first preacher of the gospel, and the original founder of the New Testament dispensation, had no civil advantages, temporal power, or worldly influence to support his claims to a divine commission, or accelerate the interests of the religion which he came to establish, and which he commanded to be preached among all nations, (Luke xxiv. 47.)

He held no exalted rank in civil society. He was not enrolled amongst the noble and the great, but occupied a low and an obscure situation in common life, and was, as to his humanity, and the trials connected with the situation in which he was placed, " a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," (Jer. liii. 3.) If we read his history as it is recorded by the four Evangelists, we shall find that he was despised by the people, rejected by the rulers, opposed by the priests, and had to depend for success en-

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tirely upon the truth, the justice, and the merits of his cause, in opposition to all that pride, and power, and prejudice, and malice could bring against it.

The instruments which he employed to preach the gospel after his ascension to glory, were also, as to every outward circumstance, equally disadvantageously situated. Instead of selecting the men whom he appointed to this arduous and important undertaking from amongst the learned, the noble, and the great, he selected them from the common ranks of society. The twelve apostles whom he designated to this office were men, who as it respects their abilities, attainments, and influence, did not rank above the common level of mankind. The success, therefore, which attended their efforts, cannot be attributed either to their extraordinary qualifications for their work, or to any previous combination of auspicious circumstances. If we look into the Acts of the Apostles, we shall there see, that outward circumstances, instead of being auspicious, were quite the reverse. The whole face of exterior appearances was entirely against them. Their prospects, calculating according to the general occurrence of human events, were hopeless and desperate, and they had no reasonable ground whatever to expect success. Should it be enquired, why their prospects of success were thus dark and forlorn, I reply, because the religion which they undertook to propagate was diametrically opposed to all the natural feelings and inclinations of the human heart. It was opposed to all the established systems of religion in the world, and refused to coalesce with any of them. It had to contend with an intolerant and persecuting government, a prejudiced people, and an interested priesthood. When, therefore, these devoted servants of Christ attempted to execute his commission by preaching the doctrines of his holy religion, they had to contend with a world in arms. The hostile bands of Satan immediately marched to arrest their progress. The powers that be joined in the confederacy. Pride, and rage, and malice, raised their brazen fronts, and the raging storm of persecution threatened at once to

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crush in its infancy the Redeemer's infant cause. But all these mighty impediments were utterly insufficient to arrest its progress. It went on, and prospered, in spite of the determined opposition, and vigorous endeavours of its most potent foes to check its career. Hostility, and power, and pride fell vanquished before it, and the most complete success attended the efforts of its messengers in their endeavours to publish it to the nations. Still it proceeded, and still it increased, until at length it filled the world with fruit. Its enemies retired ashamed and confounded. The unnerved arm of opposition slunk from the contest; and its foes being all conquered by the force of its truths, it was left in quiet possession of the field, filled with the spoils of victory, and extending universal peace and holiness, as the fruit of the triumphs it had won. The acknowledged principle, that a corresponding connection must ever exist between cause and effect, will hold good, when applied to the moral as well as to the natural world. And the extraordinary success which attended the preaching of the gospel under such disadvantageous circumstances, must, according to this principle, (the truth of which is supported by reason, and confirmed by observation,) be attributed to some operative cause, sufficient to produce such a wonderful and unprecedented effect. It is trifling and vain to say that it was the natural result of the apostles' zealous, laborious, and continued proselyting exertions. Experience shews us, that no such effects attend the efforts of those who are engaged in its propagation in the ordinary course of events. This astonishing success, therefore, which crowned the labours of the apostles, can only be attributed to the co-operation of a divine power, which accompanied the word preached, and made it effectual to the overturning of the power of darkness, and the universal establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom. We read, (Mark xvi. 20,) "That they (i. e. the apostles) went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them;" which declaration accords with his gracious pro-

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mise, recorded in Matt. xxviii. 20, to be with them always, even unto the end of the world. Let the reader, therefore, divest his mind of prejudice, and he must, when he contemplates the rapid and almost universal spread of Christianity which, at the commencement of its publication, resulted from the labours of these devoted men, be constrained to acknowledge the truth of this inspired declaration. The first preachers of Christianity could no more have accomplished what they did, in their own strength, or by their own exertions, than a child could pluck the sun from the heavens, or alter the courses of the planetary worlds. If God had not been with them, their work of faith and labour of love would have produced no effect. In all probability, the old superstition would never have been overturned, but to the present day darkness would have continued to cover the earth, and gross darkness the people, (Isa. lx. 2.)

I have now briefly adverted to the instruments employed to preach the gospel at the commencement of the Christian era---to the abounding and continued opposition which they universally had to encounter---and to the unparalleled success which every where attended their labours. On the ground, therefore, of this statement, I cannot but suppose that every candid man will be ready to acknowledge, that under such circumstances it never could have succeeded, and spread in the manner which it did, had not the interposing arm, and co-operating power of God, attended the labours of his servants, and been present for their defence and support. If, therefore, the interposition of a divine power was absolutely requisite to effect such a triumph, then the fact, that such a triumph has actually been gained, sufficiently evidences that this divine power was actually engaged on its behalf: and the single circumstance of that power thus interposing and effecting its establishment necessarily proves, that its origin is divine; because we cannot suppose, that had it been the offspring of fraud and imposi-

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tion, God would have thus interposed, and by causing his own power to co-operate with the labours of those who were engaged in its propagation, in such an extraordinary manner have blessed their endeavours, and succeeded their efforts to effect its establishment in the world.

For the confirmation of this statement, and in order to shew the correctness of the foregoing argument, allow me to appeal to the labours of the missionaries now engaged in preaching the gospel of Christ to the inhabitants of this country. Though very small is their success, compared with that which attended the labours of the first preachers of this holy religion, a slight attention to their comparatively disadvantageous circumstances sufficiently accounts for it. The apostles had means which they could employ, and facts to which they could appeal, which these missionaries have not. They were, according to a promise which the Saviour had given them, and which is recorded in Luke xxiv. 49, and Acts i. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, endued with "a power from on high," by which they were peculiarly qualified for their work. The present is merely an ordinary, whilst the former was altogether an extraordinary and miraculous age. God upholds the preachers of the present day, and blesses in a common way their efforts; but he worked with, and blessed the labours of the first messengers of his truth, in an eminent and uncommon degree. The influences of the Spirit of God, who is the efficient agent in the work of conversion, are now in their measure restrained. They were copiously poured out upon the labours of the apostles; and to this peculiar and extraordinary measure of divine influence must be attributed the unparalleled and abounding success which every where attended their efforts.

The undeniable fact, therefore, that they went forth, "the Lord working with them," brings the point in dispute at once to an issue, by demonstratively proving, as

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it evidently does, the truth and divine authority of the Christian revelation.

I have dwelt more particularly upon the miraculous and extraordinary manifestation of divine power, which accompanied the labours of the first preachers of the gospel, because being more astonishing, it strikes the mind with greater force. The manifestation of this power, however, in the most ordinary way, were it but in the conversion of a single sinner, establishes, if not so clearly, yet in point of reality as certainly, the truth of the afore stated conclusion. It sufficiently proves, without any other evidence, that the Bible, the truths of which are the instrumental means of that sinner's conversion, is undoubtedly from God, and the exclusive revelation which he has given to effect the salvation of a world of guilty fallen creatures.

Section 2.

Of the Spread of Mahomudanism.

Perhaps it may be said, in reply to what has been advanced in the preceding section in support of the truth of Christianity, that if the extensive spread of a religion is to be considered as a proof that its authority is divine, then the Koran of Mahomud, on account of the multitudes who have embraced his religion, is on this ground as well authenticated as the Christian revelation. In answer to this objection, I reply, that the simple fact of a religion spreading, is not (as has already been observed) in itself to be considered as a proof that it is of divine authority. It is the nature of the religion, and the circumstances under which it spreads, which are principally to be considered, in our endeavours to come to a conclusion on this important and interesting point. The extension which the religion of Mahomud has obtained, was not accomplished under the peculiar circumstances in which Christianity was placed on its first publication; and it is not the bare fact of the triumphs which it has obtain-

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ed, but the accumulated difficulties under which these triumphs were obtained, to which we appeal, and from which the argument in support of its divine authority is principally derived. I shall, therefore, proceed to answer this objection by endeavouring to shew, that if a comparison be instituted, and a due attention paid to the opposite nature of the two religions, and the different circumstances under which they obtained their respective triumphs, there is nothing in it detrimental to the truth of Christianity; neither can any weight on this ground possibly be attached to Mahomudanism, or any reasonable argument for its truth drawn from the achievements which it has effected in the world.

1. If we contemplate the nature of the religion of Mahomud, and compare it with that which is revealed in the Scriptures of the New Testament, we shall observe a striking difference between the immoral tendency of the former, and the exalted purity of the latter. Mahomudanism allows in the present world, and promises in the future, the enjoyment of various kinds of sensual indulgence. On this account, therefore, it is exactly adapted to the depraved and vitiated desires of the human heart, and calculated by this indulgence of the passions to meet the reception, and obtain the approbation of fallen sensual man. But Christianity, instead of thus falling in with the natural and pleasing propensities of mankind, is in direct opposition to them. It admits of no sinful indulgence whatever: every man who receives it is commanded to abstain from all appearance of evil, (1 Thess. v. 22;) and it solemnly and imperatively declares, that the soul which sinneth, it shall die, (Ezek. xviii. 4.) Whilst, therefore, the strict requirements of the Christian religion, being entirely opposed to the natural inclination of mankind, would undoubtedly be a weighty obstacle in the way of its progress, the reverse being the case with the religion of Mahomud, must necessarily have had a mighty influence in accelerating its triumphs, and procuring its establishment in the countries where its claims,

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its promises, and its nature were made known. It is true there are in this (and also in various other countries,) many persons who call themselves Christians, and are yet living in every kind of wicked and sensual gratification; but this is no objection to Christianity, any more than the laws of a wise and excellent king can be objected to, because a multitude of persons residing in his dominions, and professing to be his subjects, live in the breach of them. The fault is in the people, not in the laws by which they pretend to be governed. The laws are good, and excellent, and wise; and it is the sin and wickedness of these people, which prevents them from regulating their conduct according to the royal statute of the sovereign whom they profess to obey. So it is with the requirements of Christianity: its laws are perfect, and its precepts pure, and admirably calculated in their moral tendency to make men wise, and holy, and happy. Every one who names the name of Christ is, as a test of allegiance to him, commanded to depart from iniquity, (2 Tim. ii. 19.) And although men may call themselves Christians, and regulate their external conduct according to the precepts which the gospel inculcates, yet if they do not act in entire conformity to this command, and watch as they ought against the rovings of a wicked imagination, they are mere hypocrites, in the sight of him who searcheth the heart, and tryeth the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings, (Jer. xvii. 10.) The profession which such characters assume, and the name which they bear, instead of availing them any thing, only adds to the measure of their guilt, and will proportionably increase the weight of that future misery which inevitably awaits them. God, we are told, hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, (Acts xvii. 31.) Their folly on that day will be made manifest unto all men, (2 Tim. iii. 9.) when, being numbered, as they then will, with the wicked, they will be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God.

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2. The greatest difficulty which a new religion usually has to encounter, arises from the attachment of the people to whom it is proposed to the previously established and prevailing system, especially if it be sanctioned by authority, and has (which is frequently the case) been reverenced and adhered to by their ancestors, from time immemorial. Men are usually prejudiced in favour of the religion in which they have been educated; and consequently have an aversion to listen with candour to the claims of a new one. Mahomud, however, had no difficulties of this kind to encounter, when he commenced his endeavours to proselyte his countrymen to the faith of the Koran. There was no previously established system of religion in the country in which he was born, either to thwart his efforts, impede his progress with its counter claims, or excite a superstitious people, a bigotted priesthood, and an intolerant government to resist him with the sword of persecution. But the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ had, at its outset, the most appalling difficulties of this nature to overcome. It was opposed to every established system of religion in the world; it coalesced with none of them, but required, on the contrary, the destruction of them all: consequently, wherever it went it was looked upon as an adversary, and its claims universally denied. Cruelty, bigotry, and malice for a long series of years rose up as its daily opponents, and called forth the most vigorous and unremitting efforts of its enemies, to effect its destruction, and blot out the name and the memory of its Author from the face of the earth.

3. Mahomud descended from a great and noble family, and had therefore wealth, and honour, and power, and secular influence engaged on his side. All these united their efforts to aid his undertaking, and promote his ambitious designs. With Christ, however, it was quite the reverse. He was born in obscurity. He possessed no influence of this kind; and instead of being supported by temporal power, like Mahomud, the religion

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which he came to establish, (as I have previously observed,) had to contend with all that this power, influenced by pride, and prejudice, and malice could do to ruin its interests, and prevent the people to whom it was addressed from receiving it.

4. Mahomud, at the outset of his career, tried what could be accomplished by exhortation and address; and yet, with all the secular influence which he possessed, he scarcely effected any thing by these means: indeed, it was not until he took to his sword, that his religion began generally to spread. But whilst Mahomud with all his influence could effect nothing by verbal exhortation, Christ, in this way, without any similar influence, effected every thing. The Christian religion admits of nothing like compulsion: with its propagation the sword has nothing to do; and it was not by the force of temporal power, but by the force of sound arguments and plain statements, which the judgment of those to whom it was addressed acknowledged to be true, that its triumphs were effected.

5. Wherever the religion of Christ went, the people who heard it were, as to compulsion, (as they now are in this country,) at liberty either to receive or reject it. But it was not so, where the claims of Mahomud were made known. The people to whom he addressed his message, must either receive his Koran or part with their heads. Multitudes lost their lives for not receiving it. But, on the other hand, multitudes lost their lives, and others their reputation, their property, and their all, and became outcasts upon the face of the earth, despised, afflicted, tormented, for receiving and adhering to the universally despised and persecuted gospel of Jesus Christ.

6. The propagation of the Christian religion was entirely the work of persuasion and conviction; but Mahomud's was entirely the work of the sword. It went not a whit beyond the point of his murderous weapon; nor is it known that he made a single convert in the face of

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persecution, and danger, and death. But to these trials, all who embraced Christianity, on its first propagation, were perpetually exposed; and its converts frequently endured them in the most painful and aggravated manner, rather than shrink from their acknowledgment of its truth, or give up their faith and hope in its promises.

7. The religion which is founded on truth and righteousness, and which has God on its side, will stand and triumph, in spite of all the opposition of men and the malice of devils. The religion of Christ has this foundation; and is supported and protected by the power of God. Consequently, it is daily gaining strength, extending its peaceful reign, and marching on to universal conquest. But the religion of Mahomud, (like that of the Hindoos,) in consequence of its wanting this foundation for permanent endurance, daily loses ground. It waxes weaker and weaker; and the time is probably not far distant when it, with every other false system of superstitious and idolatrous worship, will be swept as a refuge of lies from the face of the earth.

CHAPTER VI.

On the Objections commonly advanced by the Hindoos against the Christian Religion.

Object. 1*st.* If Christianity be true, and the only true religion, and its reception necessary to salvation, why has not God superseded the necessity of so many arguments, by giving some plain and convincing proof of its divine authority, which, appealing to the senses, should irresistibly compel men to believe it?

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Answer. We are not acquainted with the plan of the divine government, and are, therefore, utterly incompetent to judge what it is proper for God to do, or not to do. His plans occasionally develope themselves, and we are favoured with a partial view of his procedure in the government of his creatures, by the numerous changes which are perpetually taking place among the nations of the earth. It is not, however, to be supposed, that we should know all the reasons which exist for the various measures which he pursues, or be able to fathom the entire mysteries of the divine counsels. We are, therefore, not at liberty to ask questions of this nature, or to cite HIM, of whom it is testified, (Isa. xxviii. 29,) that he is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, to the tribunal of our shallow reason and mistaken judgment. There is no end to questions of this kind: we may just as well ask, Why has God only made one sun and one moon? Why has he made all men of one form, and nearly of one stature? Why has he created so many destructive insects? and a thousand other questions of a similar kind, all of which are as unreasonable as they are wicked and absurd. In reference to the precise nature and degree of the evidence by which the truth of Christianity ought to be attested, that must be left entirely with God: sufficient evidence is all that we can possibly require, and sufficient evidence he has already given us in abundance. On the ground of similar evidence, (viz. that which arises from accredited testimony,) we assent to the truth of various occurrences which are perpetually taking place in common life, although we have no opportunity of examining them for ourselves. We are therefore required, (and the requirement is reasonable and just,) to receive the Christian religion on the same satisfactory testimony; and all who do not receive it on the ground of this testimony will be favoured with no other evidence, but left to perish everlastingly, as the fruit of their obstinacy and unbelief. To require a continuance of miracles, (as many among the Hindoos profess to do,)

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is childish and vain; and were God to gratify their unreasonable requirements in this respect, no beneficial effect would be produced. Multitudes of the Jews who were eye-witnesses of the repeated and wonderful miracles of the Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles, continued in their impenitency and unbelief. The word of God assures us, and we may appeal to this fact, and also to our every day experience for the truth of the declaration, that the men who reject Christianity on account (as they say) of the insufficiency of its evidence, would not be induced to receive it on the ground of any evidence whatever. If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be pursuaded, though one rose from the dead, (Luke xvi. 31.)

It matters not (as I have before observed) how weighty and satisfactory the evidences of Christianity may be in themselves: if they be not candidly investigated, and the mind be not open to receive and act up to the force of the conviction which arises from their fulness and sufficiency, no beneficial effect of course can be expected to follow. It is not the want of evidence in support of the claims of Christianity, but the want of attention to that evidence on the part of the Hindoos, which prevents them from embracing it. If they would but seriously and candidly bend their attention to this subject, they would soon find the proofs of its truth to be utterly irresistible. Their minds would be enlightened to clear and correct views of futurity; and the conviction which they would receive of the supreme importance and paramount claims of the Bible would compel them to cast their idols to the moles and to the bats, (Isa. ii. 20,) to acknowledge the authority to which it lays claim, and to receive Jesus Christ, who is therein presented to their view, as of God made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, (1 Cor. i. 30.)

Objection 2d. If Christianity be the only true religion, how is it that so many nations of the earth have been suffered to remain ignorant of it to the present day? God dispenses the ordinary blessings of his providence in

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a greater or less degree to all people:—why then has he totally witheld this supreme, most important, and necessary blessing from so many of his creatures, when all of them equally stand in need of it?

Answer. The reply which I have given to the foregoing question, relative to God's not pursuing a line of conduct different from the one which he does, applies with equal force to this objection. And it is an objection which will be found, if duly considered, to be as fully applicable to the conduct of God in nature aud providence, as it is to the subject of our present enquiries. How many blessings, calculated to promote the happiness and comfort of mankind in the present life, does he give in superabundance to some, whilst he entirely withholds them from others? The ground, we know, requires a moderate quantity of rain to make it fruitful and productive; but instead of the requisite quantity being given alike to every part, how frequently does it occur, that in some places there is a total inundation, and in others a parching thirst, both of which extremes are alike destructive of the kindly fruits of the earth? But we cannot, we dare not deny the agency and direction of God in these events, although we are unable to account for his apparently unequal distribution of his favours:—and the remark is equally applicable to the manner in which God dispenses the richer blessings of his grace. He is a sovereign, and nothing can be more blasphemous than for frail short-sighted man to cavil at his procedure, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Job ix. 12;) for he giveth not account of any of his matters, (Job xxxiii. 13.) Mankind universally have forfeited every claim to his mercy and goodness; and instead of questioning the propriety of his procedure, because he does not bestow his favours alike upon all, we ought to be thankful that he bestows them upon any; and leave it with him, in the exercise of his infinite wisdom, to judge where, and when, and upon whom it will be consistent with his goodness, and most calculated to promote his own glory, to dispense them.

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It will, however, be found, that this objection, when duly considered, has no application whatever to the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel of his salvation is designed to benefit and bless the whole human race; and had the nations of the earth manifested a disposition to receive it, God would undoubtedly, in the course of his providential dispensations, have sent it to them ages ago. It is only their enmity to it, (which enmity continues to the present day,) that has been the cause of its being withheld from them. The Hindoos frequently object to Christianity, on account of its not having been sent to them sooner. This objection, however, is invalidated by the history of the primitive church, from which we learn, that it was sent to them soon after the Redeemer's ascension to glory. The apostles Thomas* and Bartholomew† visited this country, and proclaimed to its perishing inhabitants the message of mercy. They were succeeded by Pantaneus, who found amongst the people a copy of Matthew's gospel, supposed to have been left by Bartholomew; but the persecutions to which they were perpetually exposed from the Bramhuns, by whom Thomas was put to death, prevented the work from proceeding, and compelled them ultimately to abandon their enterprise of benevolence. From all accounts which we have of the ancient state of the Hindoos, it appears that they were formerly, as a nation, greatly superior in every respect to what they are in the present day. And I here take the liberty of enquiring, whether there be any thing improper in considering their present inferior condition as the punishment of their sin in rejecting the gospel, which was undoubtedly brought to them at an early period by the immediate disciples of Christ. That such a punishment would be likely to ensue, perfectly accords with the Scripture declaration: "Them that honour me I will honour; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." 1 Sam. ii. 30. And I refer the reader for an

* See a Father's Gift to his Children, page 78.
† Murray's Evidences, page 93.

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ocular exemplification of the truth of this passage to the present state of the Jews, who for the same sin are now sunk, and degraded, and scattered over the face of the whole earth. If we survey the present state of the world, we shall also find, that almost every nation is exalted or degraded, in proportion to their obedience or contempt of the gospel. What nation at the present day is superior to the English? If we look at her colonies, if we look at her in a political, commercial, or any other point of view, we shall find that in honour, and rank, and wealth, and influence, she is chief among the nations. And why is it thus? It is because England (although there is much in her to be lamented, and some classes of her inhabitants are almost proverbial for their wickedness) is, nevertheless, as a nation, distinguished both by her attachment to the gospel at home, and by her continued and strenuous exertions to send it abroad. In this respect, she honours God; and therefore God, according to the declaration of his word, thus honours and exalts her.

I do not by this statement mean to hold forth temporal advantage as an allurement to men to embrace the gospel, because no such blessings are individually promised, and therefore they are on no account whatever to be expected. But I do assert, that in a national point of view, the greatest advantages and blessings of a temporal nature are derived from receiving and obeying it. And the reason is plain: individual rewards and punishments are reserved for a future state; but as men in that state cease to exist in a national capacity, it necessarily follows, that, as nations, they can neither be made miserable nor happy; and, therefore, national blessings are bestowed, and national punishments are awarded, to them in the present life.

Object. 3. There are many things in the Bible which it is very difficult to understand. If it be the word of God, why is it not written in a plain and intelligible manner, so as to be easily understood?

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Ans. The Bible undoubtedly contains many things which the mind of man cannot fully comprehend; but they are not such things as it is absolutely essential for him to be acquainted with. Every part of divine truth, the knowledge of which is immediately connected with salvation, is so plain and clear, "that he may run that readeth it;" (Hab. ii. 2.) and "the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein." (Isa. xxxv. 8.) Instead, therefore, of allowing the difficulties which the Bible contains to be of any weight, as objections against it, I assert that they ought rather to be looked upon as additional proofs of its authenticity, being what, in a revelation from the infinitely wise God, we might naturally expect. If a philosopher can with perfect ease speak in such a way that an ignorant unlearned man cannot understand him, is it at all to be wondered at, that, when God speaks, his address should contain some things that shortsighted ignorant men, whose eyes are blinded by the god of this world, cannot comprehend? I also observe, that if this be considered as a valid objection, it will be found, on examination, to militate as much against natural as it does against revealed religion. There are a thousand objects in the world which we cannot comprehend, and a thousand occurrences are perpetually taking place in the earth, by the permission of the God of nature, which we cannot explain or account for on any principles whatever. And yet, notwithstanding all this, we still allow God to be the God of universal nature, and the moral Governor of all worlds. It is therefore highly improper and unreasonable to bring this forward as an objection in the one case, since we do not look upon it as such in the other. If notwithstanding these apparent difficulties, we still admit the agency of God in the works of nature, why do we not act consistently, and allow him, on the same principles, to be the author and source of the religion which is revealed in the Bible? Reason and nature, instead of opposing, evidently come forward in this instance to lend their aid, and bear their testimony to the truths of revelation. There

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is a union and harmony in all God's works and ways: and if the Bible, instead of being opposed to, harmonizes with what we see of him, as he appears in the creation and government of the world, we ought not to bring this forward as an objection, but rather to look upon it as a strong presumptive evidence that they have both one and the same Author: that the same divine and glorious Being, who "hath made the earth by his power, established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion," (Jer. x. 12,) hath also given the Bible to teach the rational creatures whom he hath formed the knowledge of his will, and to guide them in the path that leads to holiness, happiness, and heaven.

Objection 4. Several of the doctrines of the Bible are exceedingly unreasonable, such as the doctrine of the Trinity, and the innocent suffering for the guilty, which is the case in the scripture doctrine of the atonement.

Ans. There is not a single man upon the face of the earth that can fully comprehend the mode of his own existence, in the union of flesh and spirit, their mutual co-operation, and the influence which they reciprocally have on each other. It is therefore highly absurd for any man to object to the Bible, because he cannot understand the method in which the divine Being is there represented to exist. Let him first understand himself, before he presumes to reject the scriptural doctrine of the divine nature, because it is beyond the comprehension of his shallow powers: and when he has accomplished the former, he may then (at least with more appearance of propriety) express his objections to the latter. As to the objection of the innocent suffering for the guilty, which undoubtedly was the case when Christ died upon the cross in order to expiate the sins of the world, this, I reply, is a thing which occurs in every-day life; yet God is the righteous Governor of the world, and no one can say that such events take place without his permission. How frequently do children, through the wickedness of their parents, suffer for faults of which they

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are innocent; and subjects, through the tyranny of a wicked king, for crimes which they have not committed? The captain of a ship sometimes drinks until he is intoxicated, in consequence of which he sinks his ship, and every soul on board perishes: and so, in a variety of similar events, the truth of this remark is exemplified. This objection, therefore, is as much opposed to the conduct of God as moral Governor of the world, as it is to the Scripture doctrine of the atonement of Jesus Christ. I observe further, that this doctrine, as it is revealed in the Scriptures, is entirely void of the injustice, which the majority of those who urge this objection generally represent to be connected with it. There was no injustice whatever on the part of God, when he laid the sins of his people upon Christ; because it was, on the part of Christ, a voluntary act, and agreeable with his own undertaking, as the Redeemer of the world. There was a mediatorial reward connected with the office which he sustained, and which resulted from the sufferings he endured. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth." (Phil. ii. 9.) "He is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father, that in him should all fulness dwell." (Col. i. 17.) "He is now gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God, angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject unto him." (1 Pet. iii. 22.) There is, therefore, in this view of the subject, no unrighteousness whatever on the part of God; and seeing he does (as is evident to every observer) govern the world by instrumentality, there is nothing at all unreasonable in the idea of his having effected its redemption in the same way. Were this doctrine, however, open to the objections to which some men suppose it

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liable, still, if God has revealed it, we are bound to receive it. We may sit in judgment upon the evidence by which the divine authority of the Bible is supported, but we have nothing to do in this way with its contents. We have no right to proceed beyond the investigation of the truth of it. If we obtain satisfaction on this point, it is immediately our duty, however contrary its doctrines may appear to our darkened understandings, to bow in subjection to its supreme authority, to receive it in the spirit of humility, and endeavour, by divine grace, to regulate our conduct according to its precepts.

Objection 5. Christians eat animal food, and pay no attention to the distinctions of caste; and therefore their religion ought to be rejected, on account of its permitting such improprieties.

The distinction of caste which prevails amongst the Hindoos, has originated in the wickedness and craft of designing men. It is merely a chain which they have forged, with which to bind the ignorant and unthinking part of mankind, and to prevent their enjoyment of that liberty which is their natural right, and their just due as rational creatures. God hath made of one blood all the nations of the earth, (Acts xvii. 2;) and, therefore, all the nations of the earth, except the Hindoos, neglect and despise caste. I see no external mark of caste which God has put upon the bodies of men, nor any thing in the natural world which tends to support the idea that he has appointed such a distinction. It is, on the contrary, self-evident that all men are made of the same materials: the same blood flows alike in the veins of all. This, therefore, with the similarity which there exists in the form, the stature, the body, the mind, and the disposition of all mankind, is sufficient to convince every rational man, that God has appointed no such distinction as this, which is so warmly advocated by the generality of the Hindoos. As to Christians eating animal food, this, I reply, forms no part of their religion. Europe does not produce sufficient grain to support its inhabitants. In their native country, they

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could not obtain a sufficiency of vegetable food. They, therefore, feel it their duty to take with thankfulness that which God in his infinite wisdom sees proper to give them. Were this practice necessary to be observed on the ground of a Scripture command, it might then be brought forward as an objection: but it is not so. The Bible, although it does not advocate, yet permits the practice. Christians, therefore, look upon this as a mere matter of custom: they see no sin in it; and having been accustomed to it in Europe, they generally continue the practice in this country. It is only the prejudice of education, combined with ignorance, which makes the Hindoos object to it. If any man, however, disapprove of it, he is not, on his becoming a Christian, obliged to conform to the Christian custom in this respect. Christianity is entirely devoid of all external ceremonies of this nature: all it requires is supreme love to God, purity of heart, and integrity of conduct: and if these are attended to, Christians are at liberty to follow the dictates of their own conscience, and to suit their convenience as to external distinctions and ceremonial observances.

There is no end to the trivial and unreasonable objections of this nature, with which men of corrupt and reprobate minds are perpetually endeavouring to undermine the authority of the gospel, (2 Tim. iii. 8.) If, however, its claims be duly attended to, these futile sophistical reasonings will all speedily vanish before the superabundant proofs of its truth. Investigation is what the gospel invites and requires. The more it is investigated, its divine authority will become increasingly luminous, the purity of its precepts more highly admired, and the richness of its promises more extensively valued. Jesus Christ, the faithful and true Witness, (Rev. iii. 14,) will be found by the impartial and candid enquirer to be "all and in all:" (Col. viii. 11.) and if he be exalted as he deserves on the throne of his affections, he will then, whilst looking unto him, be ready, in the language of ap-

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propriating faith, to say with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee." (Psalm lxxiii. 25.)

Concluding Observations.

1. The Hindoos frequently enquire, what benefit they would derive from the gospel, were they to embrace it. To this question I answer, that eternal life in the upper and better world will be the portion of all who receive it, not as the word of man, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe. (1 Thess. ii. 13.) We are told by the Apostle, (1 Tim. iv. 8.) that "godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." The gospel, in its legitimate influence, is calculated universally to benefit the temporal interests of mankind. The promise relating to the present life, however, referred to in the former part of this passage, is only general in its application: it is not, therefore, to be expected, that it will be verified in the individual experience of every man who receives it. The followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, through the wickedness which every where abounds in the world, are occasionally exposed to such severe persecution through their profession of his religion, that they do not derive from it those temporal benefits which it is otherwise calculated to impart. Were the Hindoos, however, universally to receive and obey it, I hesitate not to say, that they would as a nation derive the most important temporal benefits from it. We are sufficiently warranted from experience to assert, that every temporal, as well as every spiritual blessing is, in a national point of view, intimately connected with a general reception and belief of the Christian religion: they are inherent in its very nature, and it has communicated them in rich abundance to all the nations who have hitherto received it. Wherever it has extended its triumphs, polygamy and infanticide have been abo-

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lished. It has restored woman to her long lost rank in civil society. It is a stranger to despotism, tyranny, and cruelty. It has taught kings to rule with moderation and equity, and subjects to obey with reverence and love. It relieves the conquered*, and it tames the conqueror; and communicates peace, and truth, and righteousness, and a thousand other blessings, to all who are brought under its genuine and benign influence.

2. There is no book of mere human production which will be found, if critically examined, to be free from false principles and incorrect statements. This, however, is not the case with the Bible: *it* contains no false principles, nor any incorrect statements; but is characterized by perfection and truth in all which it advances. Its decided superiority in this respect, therefore, to all books of mere human production, is a fact which demands our attention, and which can be accounted for on no other ground, than the supposition and acknowledgment that it has come from him, of whom it is testified, that "He is a Rock, and his work is perfect;" (Deut. xxxii. 3.) that "his word is right, and all his works are done in truth;" (Psalm xxxiii. 4.) and that "the works of his hands are verity and judgment: all his commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness." (Psalm cxi. 7, 8.)

It is also equally remarkable, that there is nothing defective in the Bible: every thing that it is requisite for man to be acquainted with, in order that he may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory, (2 Tim. ii. 10.) is in it fully revealed. It is calculated to answer, in the most excellent manner, all the great and important ends for which God has graciously given it. Every duty which men are required to perform is clearly

* The Hindoos admit the truth of this remark, because they see it exemplified in the lenity with which the English treat their prisoners of war. They know that the Mahomedans formerly acted in a very different way; and also that, in the present day, no nation which is not under the influence of Christian laws acts with such lenity towards its adversaries when it has obtained the victory over them.

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defined. The rules necessary to performance are fully prescribed. Obedience is authoritatively enjoined, and adequate motives are abundantly presented. The various articles of faith which it inculcates are conspicuously exhibited, and the truth of its claims are fully substantiated, by its purity, the fulfilment of its prophetic declarations, the miracles which have been wrought to attest it, and the fulness and sufficiency of its own intrinsic evidence. How different then in these respects is the Bible from the Shasters of the Hindoos! They are full of false principles and contradictory statements. They dishonour God by the representation which they give of his character. They open the door to every kind of licentiousness, by the profane songs, obscene dances, and other indecencies connected with their prescribed festivals. They communicate no benefit to mankind, prescribe no clear rules of duty, nor present any adequate motive to persevering obedience. The great mass of mankind is, according to the religious system of those Shasters, represented as consisting of two principal divisions. The Brumhagyanees, or worshippers of the true God, (or rather of the spirit of the world,) and the Kormogyanees, or worshippers of the debtas and idols. The reward which the Shasters promise to the adherents of the first mentioned system is, that they shall after death be absorbed into the Deity. The idolaters who belong to the second class are told, that they will be received into heaven; but the period which they will be permitted to remain there in the enjoyment of its felicity will be limited, according to the merit which they have previously acquired. When their merit is expended, then their happiness will terminate: they will then be reunited to the body; return to earth, and be again immersed in all the miseries of the present life*. If the candid reader, therefore, will duly consider the nature of the felicity which is

* The Shasters say, that in the next birth, instead of appearing as human beings, they will, for the punishment of their sins, become cows or horses; or if they have previously been very wicked, they will then be doomed to appear in

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here specified, he must acknowledge that it is trivial and defective, and by no means meets the wants and circumstances of man, considering him as a rational and an immortal being. The felicity which it says shall be awarded to the worshippers of the spirit of the world, is in fact nothing more than annihilation. Absorption into the Deity, necessarily involves the destruction of personal identity, and of course for ever terminates the happiness which men, by their continued individual existence, are capable of eternally enjoying. And the reward which is promised to the worshippers of the debtas and idols, (were it true that any happiness would be awarded to them in a future state,) is likewise equally objectionable. Suppose the idolaters were received into heaven on the terms which are stated in the Shaster, they would be utterly unable to enjoy its felicity. The recollection that their happiness (however great for the time being) must speedily terminate, would, by the pain which it produced, in a considerable measure deprive them of all present enjoyment. Those rewards, therefore, which the Hindoo Shasters hold out to the faithful adherents of the religion which they inculcate, are totally defective as motives to uniform and persevering obedience. Man is an immortal being, and requires a happiness perfect in degree, and perpetual in duration; and it is the consideration of such a happiness alone that is sufficient to enable him to support with patience the trials of life, and by which he will be strengthened to resist with steadfastness the temptations to which he is perpetually exposed. The Bible, therefore, in its promises of future felicity, as well as in every other respect, is infinitely superior to the Hindoo Shasters, because eternal life be-

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the bodies of the inferior animals, such as pigs, dogs, cats, &c. &c.* Consequently their misery will ultimately be much greater than it is now. What happiness, therefore, could these infatuated idolaters possibly enjoy, were they admitted into heaven, knowing, as they must, that such a fate awaited them?

* যতো যতো বারহি দৈবতোপিতঃ মলো বিকারাত্মক বাণ শঙ্কয়ঃ। পুনঃ পুনঃ বারা ইতিবন্ধু দেহারণৌ সুখাবাপ্তঃ নহ তেন জায়তে।

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yond the narrow bounds of time,—"an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven," (1 Peter i. 4.) is the rich reward which it exhibits to all the faithful followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Hindoo Shasters present as a motive nothing which is equal to this. We have here, in this promise of the Christian Scriptures, a felicity presented which meets the most enlarged desires of the human mind. The promise of a blessedness which, if it be considered as a motive to obedience, will ever be found amply sufficient to rouse the Christian to activity and diligence in his Master's service. Having these promises, he will cleanse himself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor. vii. 1.) And animated by the believing expectation of this exalted felicity, he will conscientiously endeavour to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. (Gal. v. 24.) He knows, that in due time he shall reap, if he faint not. (Gal. vi. 9.) He will therefore walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless; (Luke i. 6;) and laying aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset him, he will run with patience the race that is set before him, looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of his faith. (Heb. xii. 1.)

3. The enemies of Christianity have frequently written against the Bible, and been indefatigable in their exertions to contradict its statements, and to prove, if possible, that it was false. And the men who have engaged in this work were fully competent to accomplish their object, were there any possibility of doing so. They entered fully into the enquiry, and were, as to the generality of them, persons of superior talents and extensive information. It is, however, a fact, that not a single individual amongst them has ever been able to effect his purpose. Had the Bible, therefore, been false, we may be quite certain, that these hostile enquirers would both have discovered and exposed its falsehood ages ago. So far, however, from succeeding in their endeavours, their

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labours have tended only to defeat their own object; and instead of proving, as they designed, that the Bible is false, they have only drawn forth and exhibited in a more striking and satisfactory point of view, the reality of its truth, and the glory and indubitable certainty of its divine original.

4. Several parts of the Bible have been written three thousand, others two thousand, and no part of it less than one thousand seven hundred years ago. And yet to the present day, no man has been able to improve upon any part of it. The present age has improved upon most of the books written in the last century; and in general, the most ancient books are found to be the most defective and incorrect. How is it, then, that the Bible, which is the most ancient of all books in the world, instead of being the most defective, is not only the most correct, but absolutely perfect in every part? It contains no false principles—nothing superfluous, and is in no respect defective. Its superiority, therefore, to all other books can be accounted for, only on the principle of its having God for its author. Were it a work of man's production, it would undoubtedly have been found as false and defective as antiquated books of mere human authority universally are; and it would long since, as the consequence of this detection, have been rejected by mankind as worthless and false.

5. The Bible is the only book in the world which contains an account of the fall. The description also which it gives of the depravity of human nature, as the consequence of man's fallen condition, is also found to be perfectly correct. It anatomizes the human heart, and exhibits its true state in the most clear and striking language, which no other book in the world does. If, therefore, it be not exclusively from God, how is it that it exclusively unfolds these distinguishing truths, which God alone could reveal?—truths which involve the most important consequences, and which it is absolutely requisite for all men to become acquainted with, in order to their salvation?

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6. The Bible invites all to whom it is proposed to examine it. And in order that it may be examined, Christians, uniting themselves into various societies for the purpose, have translated it into almost all the languages of the earth, which they would not have done, were they not fully convinced of its divine authenticity. The policy of a deceiver is to move as silently as possible, in order that he may avoid detection. It is not a good, but a bad rupee, that suffers by falling into the hands of the money changer. The Hindoo Shasters, by being kept secret and forbidden the people, are like a bad rupee, to which an examination would prove fatal. But it is the reverse with the Bible: like the good rupee, it has nothing to fear from the closest scrutiny, and the most critical investigation. Bring it, therefore, to this touchstone of truth; there is no danger to be apprehended from the result of the research: the more it is examined, the more it will be valued, and the brighter will appear the evidences of its truth, and the certainty of its divine original.

7. The Lord Jesus Christ frequently and plainly forewarned his disciples of the troubles and the difficulties to which they would be exposed, in consequence of their having embraced his religion. It is, therefore, evident that he was not an impostor, otherwise he never would have acted a part so prejudicial to his interests, and so much calculated, by the discouragement which it would excite in his followers, to ruin the interests of the religion which he was endeavouring to establish. An impostor, in his efforts to draw men after him, will tell them enough of the advantages to be derived fron the system which he advocates; but as to the difficulties and trials to which they may be exposed, if they adopt his sentiments, and follow his prescribed rules, these he will carefully keep out of sight. And if Christ had been an impostor, we may reasonably suppose that he also would have adopted this line of policy; and instead of exhibiting the dangers, have only pointed out to his followers the benefits which they would derive from embracing Christianity.

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8. In addition to the evidences contained in this book, there are a variety of others which might be brought forward in confirmation of the truth of Christianity. They are, however, of such a description, that a knowledge of the nature, spirit, and design of Christianity is requisite, in order to understand and appreciate them. It is in vain to attempt to make a blind man understand the properties of light; and it is equally in vain to endeavour to make men who have not obtained an experimental acquaintance with the gospel to understand the value, the force, and the application of some of its most important evidences. We read, (John vii. 17.) "If any man will do his will, (i. e. the will of God,) he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God:" and again, (1 John v. 10.) "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." These passages refer to an evidence which, in the experience of the Christian, is one of the most satisfactory and convincing that can possibly be advanced in support of the truth and divine authority of the Bible. It is, however, a proof which cannot be insisted upon before those who are strangers to the power and influence of the grace which the gospel imparts, because "the knowledge of the doctrine," and "the witness" promised in these Scriptures, apply exclusively to the Christian. It is, therefore, requisite for men to become Christians, before they can comprehend its nature, or fully appreciate its worth and importance. Besides this, there are also other proofs, which cannot be enlarged upon in writing for the Hindoos, because they would not be able to judge of their truth and their force, on account of their not being acquainted with European literature. I have, however, brought forward in this work six distinct classes of evidence, i. e. one distinct class in each of the preceding chapters, viz. The internal evidences; the miracles; the prophecies; the resurrection; the spread of the gospel; and the sufferings and conduct of the apostles; exclusive of the concluding observations and other collateral remarks, calculated to throw increasing and

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important light upon the subject. Each of these chapters separately (but especially the first) contains, I conceive, sufficient proof to convince the judgment and solve the doubts of every candid enquirer. And the combined proof arising from the whole forms such a body of solid, satisfactory, conclusive, and irresistible evidence, as no other book in the world can advance in support of the truth, either of the histories which it may record, or the precepts which it may inculcate. The man, therefore, who rejects Christianity on account of the insufficiency of its evidence, will have no excuse to plead when he is called to "appear before the judgment seat of Christ;" (2 Cor. v. 10.) who will shortly "be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. i. 7. 8.) "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John iii. 16.) Christ died upon the cross to atone for the sins of mankind. In doing this, he has manifested the greatest love and the richest mercy to our fallen race. The religion which he has established in the world is confirmed and substantiated by the most incontrovertible proofs; and is, on account of its excellence and truth, "worthy of all acceptation." (1 Tim. i. 15.) God, therefore, will not suffer those to go unpunished who despise his Son, or who neglect, and treat with indifference, the religion which he has established. Whether men believe or deny the assertion, it does not alter the reality of the case. Their refusing to believe it will neither avert nor diminish the misery which awaits them. And however they may now look upon it as a matter of indifference, yet the period is not far distant, when they will find, to their everlasting destruction, that Christianity is true, and the only true religion in the world; and that all systems which are opposed to it have their origin in deception and falsehood. It is not by any of these false systems, however, to which men may now ad-

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here, but by the gospel, that they will be judged at the last day. It is consequently of the highest importance, that every man who is desirous of distinguishing truth from falsehood, and who feels the importance of endeavouring to secure the salvation of his soul, should divest his mind of prejudice—exercise his reason—and in the spirit of prayer, and in the use of all the means which he does or may possess, with care and diligence examine the claims of the book which is here recommended, and which, fearless of contradiction, I unhesitatingly assert, "has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its contents." The plea of antiquity, example, and custom, which is commonly urged by the Hindoos as an excuse for their neglecting the claims of the gospel, will prove utterly unavailable at the great day of final retribution. The guilt of those of the present generation of Hindoos, who have heard the gospel, will be far greater than that of their ancestors to whom it was not preached, and who have not passed into the eternal world, as the majority of the present race, who hear it, are doing, under the aggravated sin of rejecting it. The Scripture furnishes us with a satisfactory answer to the futile plea commonly advanced by the Hindoos, as to the duty of continuing to perform what their ancestors have done: it tells us, that "the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now he commandeth all men every where to repent." (Acts xvii. 30.) "Repent and believe the gospel," (Matt. i. 15.) is the great mandate which he now issues forth, and which is binding upon all men; and fearful will be the doom of every Hindoo who hears the call of the gospel, and refuses to obey this command. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," (Acts xvi. 31.) is the rich promise which Christianity exhibits. "He," it is written, "that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life:" but to this is annexed the solemn declaration, "He that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." God has given

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his Son Jesus Christ to be his salvation unto the ends of the earth: (Isa. xlix. 6.) "neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.) "How then shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. ii. 3.) The case is clear, and the conclusion plain. Such characters will find no way of escape: to them it will soon be said, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." (Acts xiii. 41.) "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh. When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me. For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord. They would none of my counsel, they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." (Prov. i. 24.)

FINIS.

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